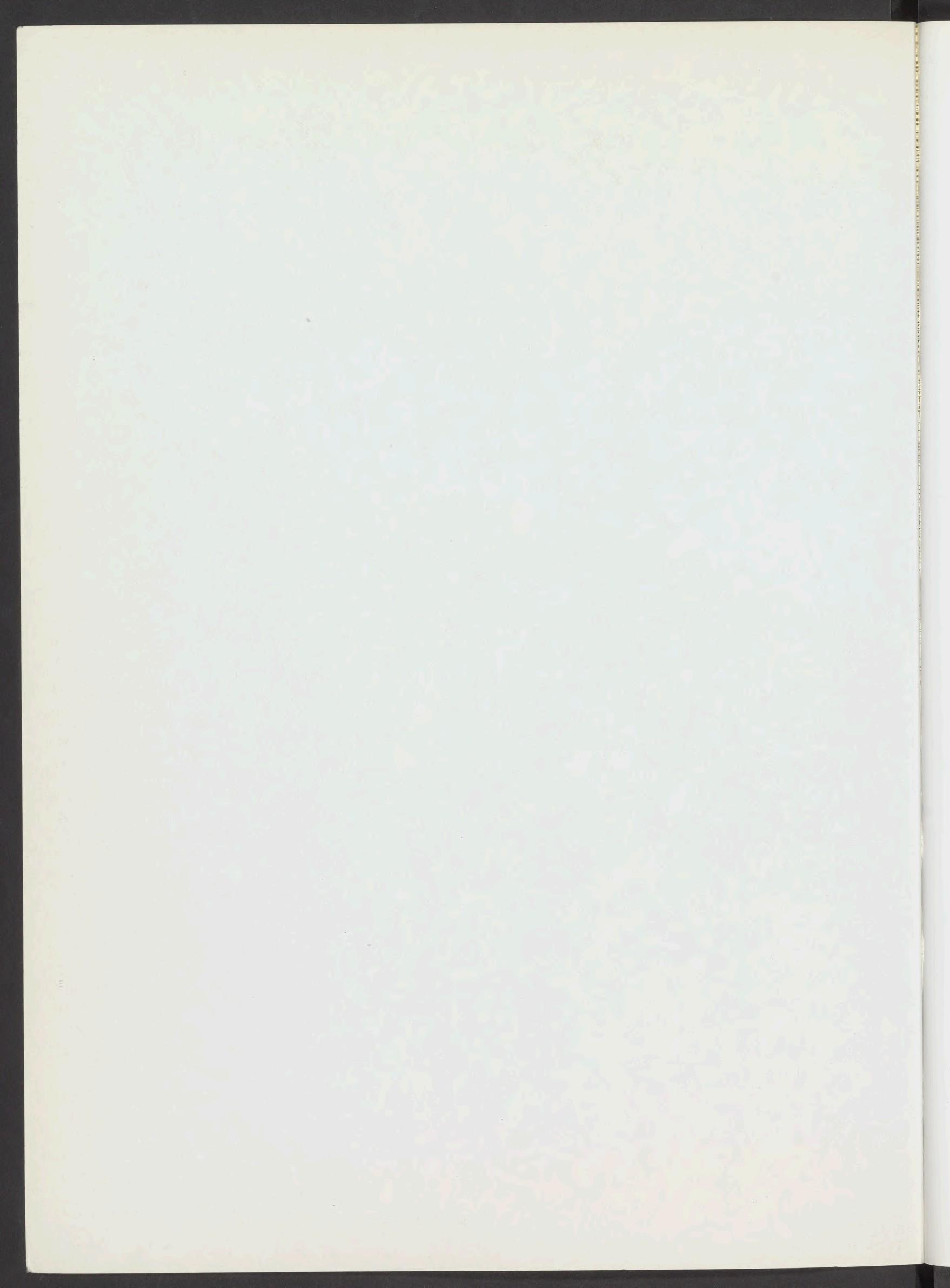


*L'amour  
fou*

*photography & surrealism*



*L'Amour fou*



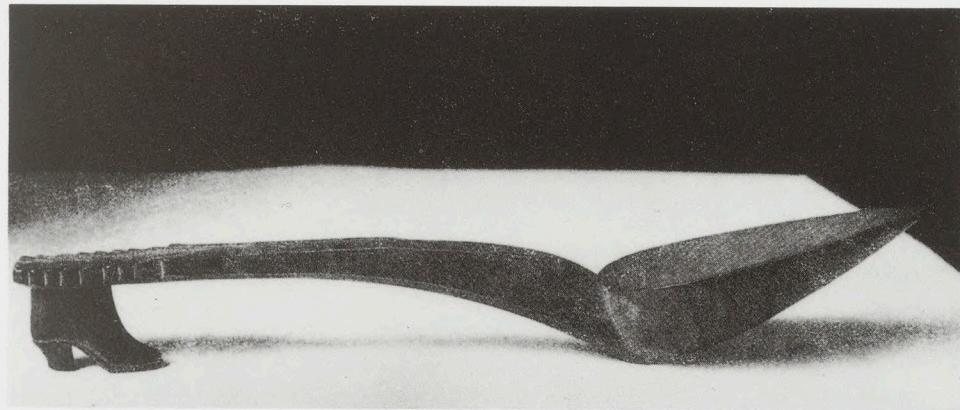


Fig. 1. Man Ray, "From the height of a little slipper joining bodily with it . . ." ("De la hauteur d'un petit soulier faisant corps avec elle . . ."), 1934.  
Published in *L'Amour fou*.

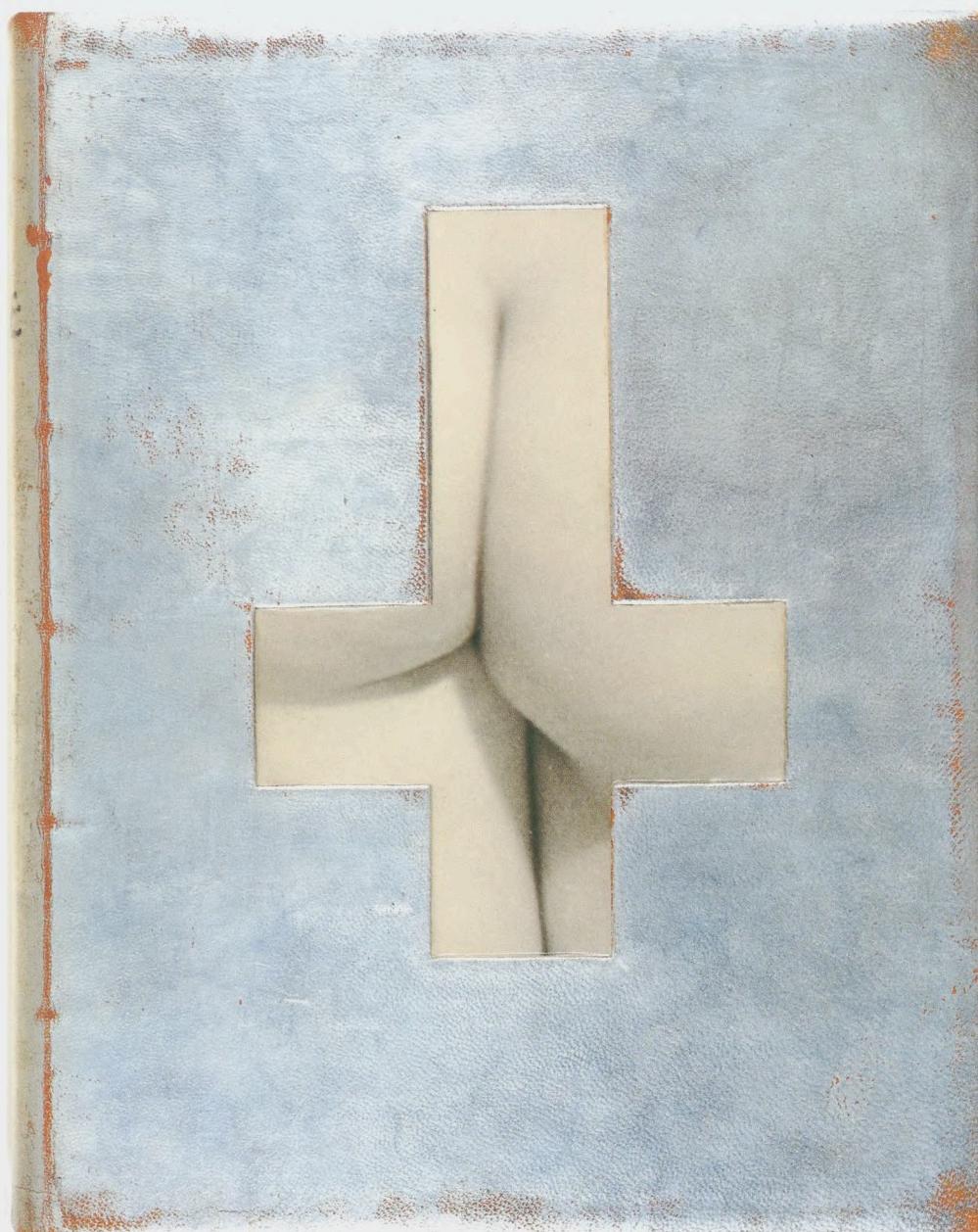


Fig. 2. Man Ray, Decorative binding, Man Ray's copy of *One Hundred Twenty Days of Sodom*, c. 1935.  
Private collection, Paris.

# *L'Amour fou*

*photography & surrealism*

Rosalind Krauss

Jane Livingston

with an essay by  
Dawn Ades

The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

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L'AMOUR FOU



*L'écriture  
automatique*

Fig. 3. André Breton, *Automatic Writing (L'Ecriture automatique)*, 1938.  
Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan.

# Preface

One could say that *L'Amour fou: Photography and Surrealism* is a project devoted to a puzzle. What, we found ourselves asking, is *photography* doing at the heart of surrealism? Despite the seeming contradiction between the extravagant productions of the unconscious and the documentary deadpan of the camera, photography was again and again placed at surrealism's visual center. How and why this occurred are the two questions that animate this project, both as a book and an exhibition.

Because these are questions that turn on the nexus of surrealist practice in Paris—as that assembled first around André Breton and then around either expressions dissenting specifically from Breton or expressions developed in other countries that fed directly into the Parisian movement—they must be answered within the historical parameters set primarily by Paris. That is, these parameters limit the scope of this project both temporally and geographically.

In searching for the specific relationships that might illuminate how photography came to act in the service of surrealism, we have examined the formation and development of the movement in its first two decades, not wishing to extend our examination beyond the war years. We have also limited ourselves to manifestations in France, Belgium, Germany, and England, feeling that the question of parallel “*surréalisante*” tendencies developing elsewhere in Europe would confuse rather than clarify the problem. As the answers to our questions began to develop, they in turn further refined our conception of our material. For the answers began to

determine not only the artists who would be included, but also the specific images within their oeuvres that would focus their activity in regard to surrealism.

Because this project arises from the kind of historical, theoretical, and critical questions that it does, it is appropriate that it began in a research effort undertaken some years ago when one of its curators, Rosalind Krauss, was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, Washington, D.C. In that context a collaboration arose quite naturally with the project's other curator, Jane Livingston, who has explored photography in both its historical and critical dimensions through repeated exhibitions at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Both of us were attracted to exploring this problem in a museum context for a variety of reasons that went well beyond the fact that it is a virtually unexplored intellectual and historical terrain. We also felt that it would necessarily raise certain questions about photography in museums; for surrealism's attitude toward photography tended always to break with what we had come to feel was a rather overzealous museological reverence toward the medium. The installation of work that had been placed originally in contexts of reproduction—in books and magazines—and variability of scale—in posters—demanded, we felt, that the current sanctification of the vintage print as the only *exhibitible* object be questioned. For this reason we wished to take certain liberties with the images we displayed, both liberties of scale and format and, where absolutely necessary, liberties with the origin of a given print. Because certain manifestations

of photographic surrealism are crucial to its presentation (for example, Man Ray's *Explosante-fixe*, a central image in André Breton's "novel" *L'Amour fou*), we did not hesitate to present these in modern prints taken from original negatives in cases where vintage prints were unavailable.

Many people have been extremely generous with their time and knowledge in helping us research this project in both its conceptual and material dimensions. We have spent many hours of great interest and pleasure with Madame Elisa Breton, Mrs. Juliette Man Ray, Madame Jacqueline Lamba, Professor José Vovelle, Madame Rosabianca Skira, M. Lucien Treillard, M. Yves Gevaert, M. Nicolas Hugnet, M. Pierre Gassman, Sir Roland Penrose, Mr. Antony Penrose, M. Raoul Ubac, M. Pierre Naville, M. Daniel Abadie, M. Lucien Biton, Mr. David Sylvester, and Mr. Timothy Baum. Particularly generous help was also extended to us by M. Jean-Claude Lemagny of the Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; M. Alain Sayag, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Mr. David Travis, Art Institute of Chicago; Miss Susan Kismaric, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Mrs. Virginia Zabriskie. The unstinting effort of the two adjunct researchers on this project needs particularly to be acknowledged: Teri Wehn-Damisch, for her superb interviews, and Winifred Schiffman, for her tireless gathering of documentation and biographical material. Pamela Lawson has assisted in the coordination of loans and book documentation; we are especially grateful to her. Alex and Caroline Castro, who have designed the book and exhibition installation, have made an invaluable contribution to the unifying spirit of this reconstruction of an artistic episode. The majority

of the reproduction photographs were prepared in Paris by Eustachy Kossakowski and Zbigniew Dlubak; we thank them for their superb work.

The lenders—in addition to those individuals and institutions mentioned above—who have generously made available works from their collections, and have thus provided the very stuff of this book and exhibition, are Gerard-Levy, Paris; Charles Levin, Lebanon, New Jersey; Paul J. Linker, Short Hills, New Jersey; M. Manoukian, Paris; Domenique de Menil, Houston; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; Les Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Pace-MacGill, New York; Antony Penrose, East Sussex, England; François Petit, Paris; Prakapas Gallery, New York; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Arturo Schwarz, Milan; Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California; Rosabianca Skira, Geneva; Frederick Sommer, Prescott, Arizona; Werner Spies, Bourg-la-Reine, France; Jo Tarr, Washington; Roger Therond, Paris; Lucien Treillard, Paris; John C. Waddell, New York; Aleta Wallach, Beverly Hills; Zabriskie Gallery, Paris and New York; and Charles S. Zucker, Newark, New Jersey.

No project of this magnitude could go forward without special support. Both the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities have generously contributed to this effort. At its very inception, this project received encouragement and support from Henry Millon, dean of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, Washington, D.C. To all the many participants in this undertaking we offer our deepest thanks.

Rosalind Krauss  
Jane Livingston

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 4. Man Ray, *André Breton*, c. 1930. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 5. Man Ray, *Waking Dream Séance*, 1924. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



# *Photography in the Service of Surrealism*

Rosalind Krauss

L'AMOUR FOU

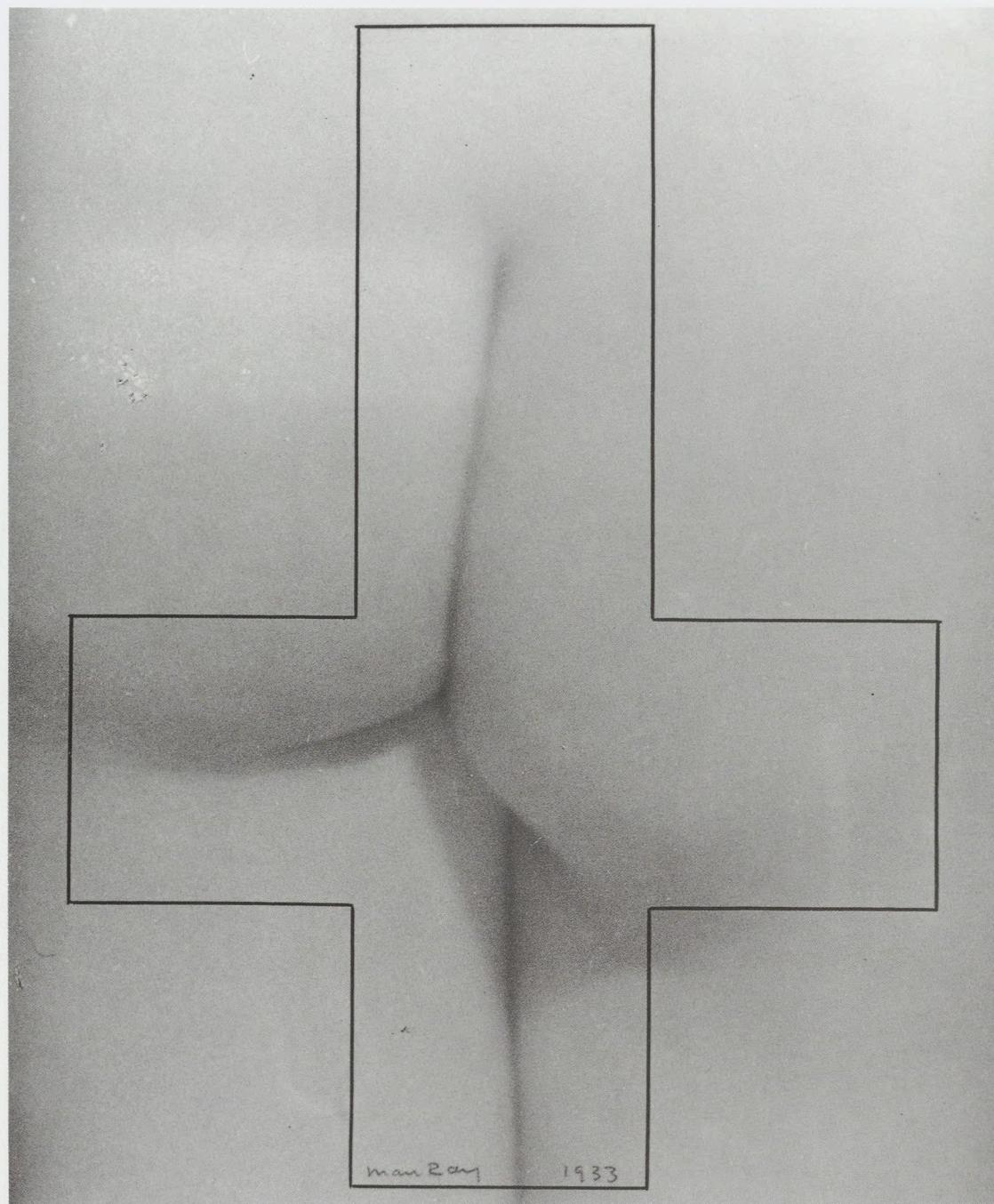


Fig. 6. Man Ray, *Monument à D. A. F. de Sade*, 1933. Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan.

*When will we have sleeping logicians, sleeping philosophers?  
I would like to sleep, in order to surrender myself to the dreamers . . .*

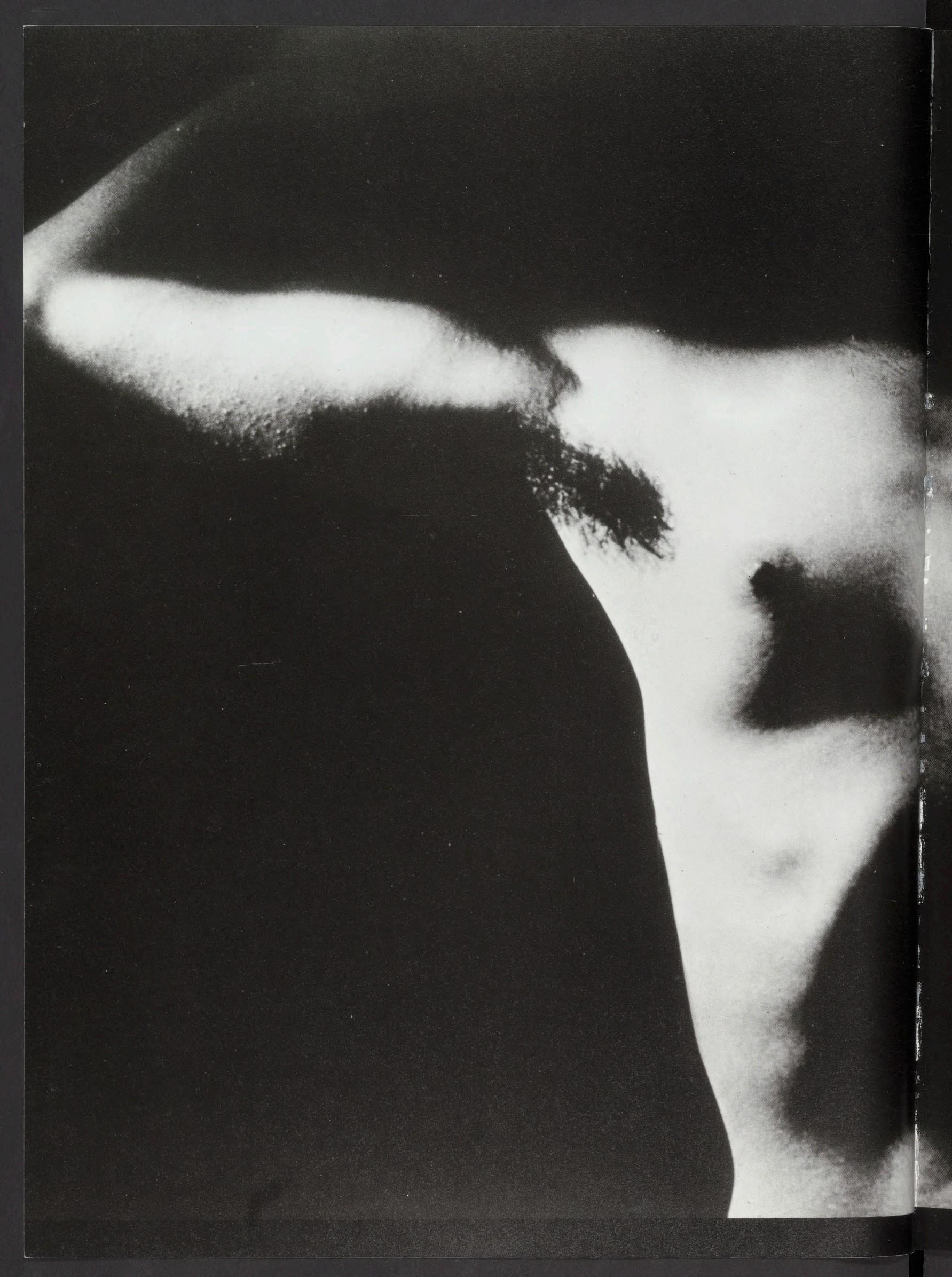
—*Manifesto of Surrealism*<sup>1</sup>

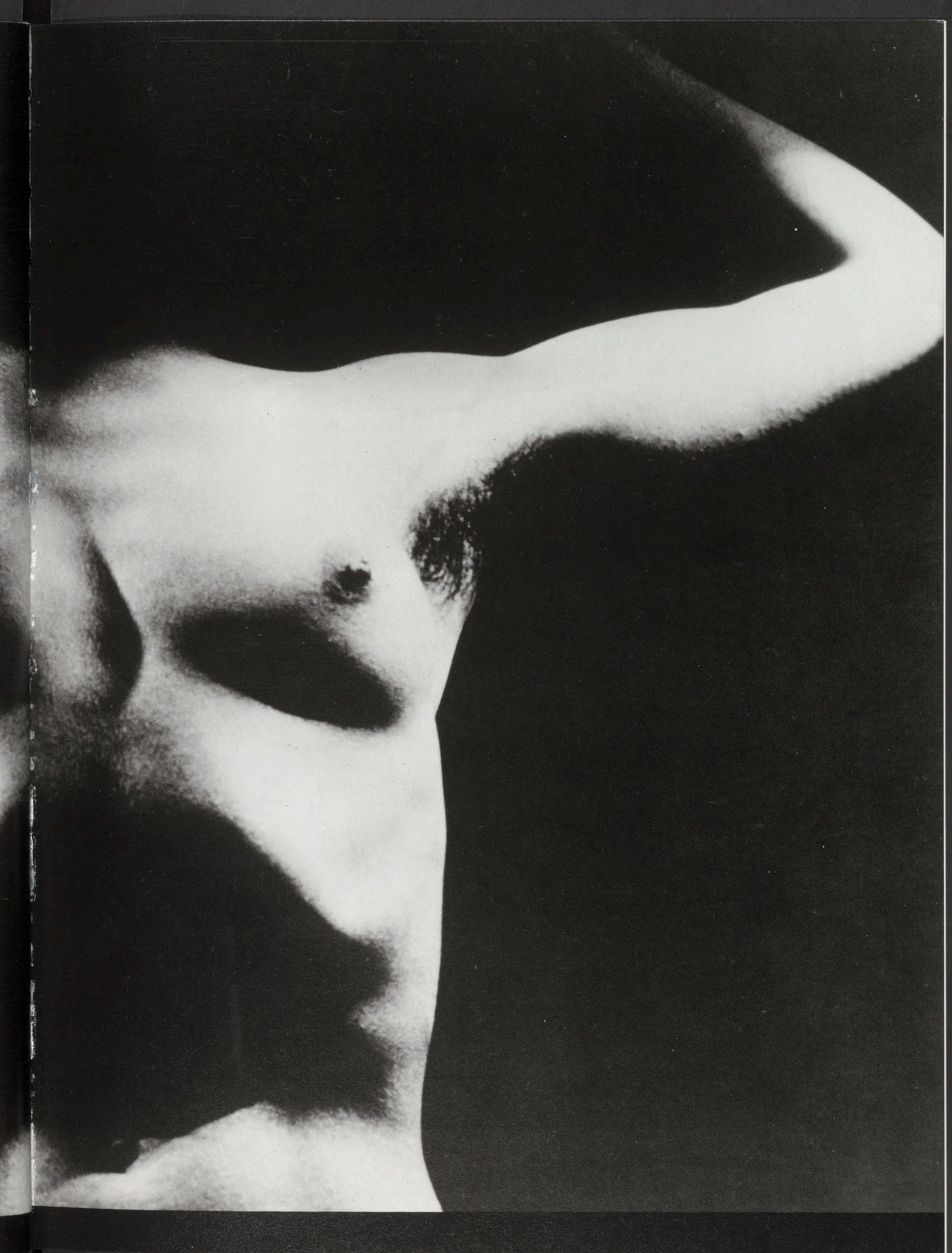
Here is a paradox. It would seem that there cannot be surrealism *and* photography, but only surrealism *or* photography. For surrealism was defined from the start as a revolution in values, a reorganization of the very way the real was conceived. Therefore, as its leader and founder, the poet André Breton, declared, “for a total revision of real values, the plastic work of art will either refer to a *purely* internal model or will cease to exist.”<sup>2</sup> These internal models were assembled when consciousness lapses. In dream, in free association, in hypnotic states, in automatism, in ecstasy or delirium, the “pure creations of the mind” were able to erupt.

Now, if painting might hope to chart these depths, photography would seem most unlikely as a medium. And indeed, in the *First Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), Breton’s aversion to “the real form of real objects” expresses itself in, for example, a dislike of the literary realism of the nineteenth-century novel disparaged, precisely, as photographic. “And the descriptions!” he deplores. “Nothing compares to their nonentity; they are simply superimposed pictures taken out of a catalogue, the author . . . takes every opportunity to slip me these postcards, he tries to make me see eye to eye with him about the obvious.”<sup>3</sup> Breton’s own “novel” *Nadja* (1928), which was copiously illustrated with photographs exactly to obviate the need for such written descriptions, disappointed its author as he looked at its “illustrated part.” For the photographs seemed to him to leave the magical places he had passed through stripped of their aura, turned “dead and disillusioning.”<sup>4</sup>

But that did not stop Breton from continuing to act on the call he had issued in 1925 when he demanded, “and when will all the books that are worth anything stop being illustrated with drawings and appear only with photographs?”<sup>5</sup> The photographs by Man Ray and Brassaï that had ornamented the sections from the novel *L’Amour fou* (1937) that had first appeared in the surrealist periodical *Minotaure* survived in the final version, faithfully keyed to the text with those “word-for-word quotations . . . as in old chambermaid’s books” that had so fascinated the critic Walter Benjamin when he thought about their anomalous presence. Thus in one of the most central articulations of the surrealist experience of the 1930s, photography continued, as Benjamin said, to “intervene.”<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, it had intervened all during the 1920s in the journals published by the movement, journals that continually served to exemplify, to define, to manifest, what it was that was surreal. Man Ray begins in *La Révolution surréaliste*, contributing six photographs to the first issue alone, to be joined by those surrealist artists like Magritte who were experimenting in photomontage and later, in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, by Breton as well. In *Documents* it was Jacques-André Boiffard who manifested the sensibility photographically. And by the time of *Minotaure*’s operation, Man Ray was working along with Raoul Ubac and Brassaï. But the issue is not just that these books and journals contained photographs—or tolerated them, as it were. The more important fact is that in a few of these photographs surrealism





L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 8. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled (for Nadja)*, 1928.  
Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



Fig. 9. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled (for Nadja)*, 1938.  
Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

pages 16–17: Fig. 7. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1933. Private collection, Paris.

achieved some of its supreme images—images of far greater power than most of what was done in the remorselessly labored paintings and drawings that came increasingly to establish the identity of Breton's concept of "surrealism and painting."

If we look at certain of these photographs, we see with a shock of recognition the simultaneous effect of displacement and condensation, the very operations of symbol formation, hard at work on the flesh of the real. In Man Ray's *Monument à D. A. F. de Sade* (fig. 6), for example, our perception of nude buttocks is guided by an act of rotation, as the cruciform inner "frame" for this image is transformed into the figure of the phallus. The sense of capture that is simultaneously implied by this fall is then heightened by the structural reciprocity between frame and image, container and contained. For it is the frame that counteracts the effects of the lighting on the flesh, a luminous intensity that causes the nude body to dissolve as it moves with increasing insubstantiality toward the edges of the sheet, seeming as it goes to become as thin as paper. Only the cruciform edges of the frame, rhyming with the clefts and folds of the photographed anatomy, serve to reinject this field with a sense of the corporeal presence of the body, guarantying its density by the act of drawing limits. But to call this body into being is to eroticize it forever, to freeze it as the symbol of pleasure. In a variation on this theme of limits, Man Ray's untitled *Minotaure* image (fig. 7) displaces the visually decapitated head of a body downward to transform the recorded torso into the face of an animal. And the cropping of the image by the photographic frame, a cropping that defines the bull's physiognomy by the act of locating it, as it were—this cutting mimes the beheading by shadow that is at work inside the image's field. So that in both these photographs a transformation of the real occurs through the action of the frame. And in both, each in its own way, the frame is experienced as figurative, as redrawing the elements inside it. These two images by Man Ray, the work of a photographer who participated directly in the movement, are stunning instances of surrealist visual practice.<sup>7</sup> But others, qualifying equally for this position as the "greatest" of surrealist images, are not really by "surrealists." Brassaï's *Involuntary Sculptures* (*Sculptures involontaires*; figs. 10, 28, 29, 30, 31) or his nudes for the journal *Minotaure* are examples. And this fact would seem to raise a problem. For how, with this blurring of boundaries, can we come to understand *surrealist* photography? How can we think of it as an aesthetic category? Do the photographs that form a historical cluster, either as objects made by surrealists or chosen by them, do they

in fact constitute some kind of unified visual field? And can we conceive this field as an aesthetic category?

What Breton himself put together, however, in the first *Surrealist Manifesto* was not so much an aesthetic category as it was a focus on certain states of mind—dreams—certain criteria—the marvelous—and certain processes—automatism. The exempla of these conditions could be picked up, as though they were *trouvailles* at a flea market, almost anywhere in history. And so Breton finds the "marvelous" in "the romantic ruins, the modern mannequin . . . Villon's gibbets, Baudelaire's couches."<sup>8</sup> And his famous incantatory list of history's surrealists is precisely the demonstration of a "found" aesthetic, rather than one that thinks itself through the formal coherence of, say, a period style:

Swift is Surrealist in malice,  
Sade is Surrealist in sadism.  
Chateaubriand is Surrealist in exoticism.  
Constant is Surrealist in politics.  
Hugo is Surrealist when he isn't stupid . . .<sup>9</sup>

In the beginning the surrealist movement may have had its members, its paid-up subscribers, we could say, but there were many more complimentary subscriptions being sent by Breton to far-off places and into the distant past.<sup>10</sup>

This attitude, which annexed to surrealism such disparate artists as Uccello, Gustave Moreau, Seurat, and Klee, seemed bent on dismantling the very notion of style. One is therefore not surprised at the position the poet and revolutionary Pierre Naville took up against the "Beaux-Arts" when he limited the visual aesthetic of the movement to memory and the pleasure of the eyes and produced a list of those things that would produce this pleasure: streets, kiosks, automobiles, cinema, photographs.<sup>11</sup> In modeling what he intended as the movement's authoritative journal, *La Révolution surréaliste*, after the French scientific review *La Nature*, Naville wanted to clarify that this was not an *art* magazine, and his decision, as its editor, to include a great deal of photography was predicated precisely, he has said, on the availability of photography's images—one could find them anywhere.<sup>12</sup> For Naville, artistic style was anathema. "I have no tastes," he wrote, "except distaste. Masters, master-crooks, smear your canvases. Everyone knows there is no *surrealist painting*. Neither the marks of a pencil abandoned to the accidents of gesture, nor the image retracing the forms of the dream . . ."<sup>13</sup>

To place in this way a ban on accident and dream as the basis of a visual style, thereby proscribing the very

resources on which Breton depended, was to make of himself a kind of roadblock in the direction along which surrealism was moving. Naville's struggle with Breton is acted out in the masthead of *La Révolution surréaliste*, which is issued at its beginning from its rue de Grenelle headquarters, dubbed the "Centrale," its editors listed as Naville and Péret, then is wrested from them in the third issue by Breton and moved to the rue Fontaine, only to return for one number to the Centrale, until it is definitively taken back home by Breton to the rue Fontaine. Many things were at issue in this struggle, but one of them was painting. For by the middle of 1925 Breton had allowed the possibility of "Surrealism and Painting," in the text he produced by that name. At first he thought of it in terms of "found" surrealists, like de Chirico or Picasso. But by March 1926 his second installment of this essay was bent on constructing precisely what "everyone knows" there is none of: a pictorial movement, a stylistic phenomenon, a surrealist painting to go into the newly organized Galerie Surréaliste.

In going about formulating this thing, this style, Breton resorted to his very own privileging of visuality, when in the first *Manifesto* he had located his own invention of psychic automatism within the experience of hypnagogic images—that is, of half-waking, half-dreaming visual experience. For it was out of the priority that he wanted to give to this sensory mode—the very medium of dream experience—that he thought he could institute a pictorial style.

"Surrealism and Painting" thus begins with a declaration of the absolute value of vision above the other senses.<sup>14</sup> Rejecting symbolism's notion that art should aspire to the condition of music, Breton rejoins that "visual images attain what music never can," and he adds, no doubt for the benefit of twentieth-century proponents of abstraction, "so may night continue to descend upon the orchestra." Breton had opened by extolling vision in terms of its absolute immediacy, its resistance to the alienating powers of thought. "The eye exists in its savage state," he had begun. "The marvels of the earth . . . have as their sole witness the wild eye that traces all its colors back to the rainbow." Vision, defined as primitive or natural, is good; it is reason, calculating, premeditated, controlling, that is bad.

No sooner, however, is the immediacy of vision established as the grounds for an aesthetic, than it is overthrown by something else, something normally thought to be its opposite: writing. Psychic automatism is itself a written form, a "scribbling on paper," a textual

production. Describing the automatic drawings of André Masson—the painter whose "chemistry of the intellect" Breton was most drawn to—Breton presents them, too, as a kind of writing, as essentially cursive, scriptorial, the result of "this hand, enamoured of its own movement and of that alone." "Indeed," he adds, "the essential discovery of surrealism is that, without preconceived intention, the pen that flows in order to write and the pencil that runs in order to draw *spin* an infinitely precious substance." So preferable is this substance, in Breton's eyes, to the fundamentally visual product of the dream, that Breton ends by giving way to a distaste for the "other road available to Surrealism," namely, "the stabilizing of dream images in the kind of still-life deception known as *trompe l'oeil* (and the very word 'deception' betrays the weakness of the process)."

Now this distinction between writing and vision is one of the many antinomies that Breton speaks of wanting surrealism to dissolve in the higher synthesis of a surreal reality that will, in this case, "resolve the dualism of perception and representation."<sup>15</sup> It is an old opposition within Western culture and one that does not simply hold these two modalities to be contrasting forms of experience, but places one higher than the other.<sup>16</sup> Perception is better—truer—because it is immediate to experience, while representation must always remain suspect because it is never anything but a copy, a re-creation in another form, a set of signs for experience. Because of its distance from the real, representation can thus be suspected of fraud.

In preferring the products of a cursive automatism to those of dream imagery, Breton appears to be reversing the classical preference of vision to writing. For in Breton's definition, it is the pictorial image that is suspect, a "deception," while the cursive one is true.<sup>17</sup>

Yet this reversal only *appears* to overthrow the traditional Platonic dislike of representation. In fact, because the visual imagery Breton suspects is a picture, and thus the representation of a dream rather than the dream itself, Breton here continues Western culture's fear of representation as an invitation to deceit. And the truth of the cursive flow of automatist writing or drawing derives precisely from the fact that this activity is less a representation of something than it is a manifestation or recording: like the lines traced on paper by machines that monitor heartbeats. What this cursive web makes present by making visible is a direct connection to buried mines of experience. "Automatism," Breton declares, "leads us in a straight line to this region," and the region he had in mind is obviously the unconscious.<sup>18</sup> With this

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE SERVICE OF SURREALISM

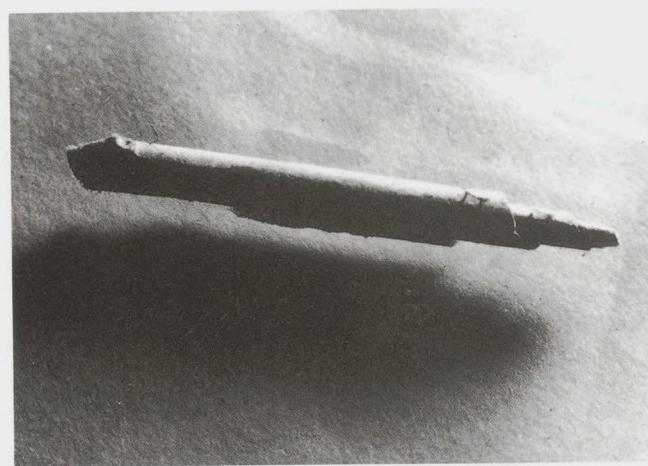


Fig. 10. Brassai, *Involuntary Sculpture* (*Sculpture involontaire*), 1933.  
Collection Rosasbianca Skira, Geneva.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 11. Man Ray, *Untitled*, c. 1935. Private collection, Paris.

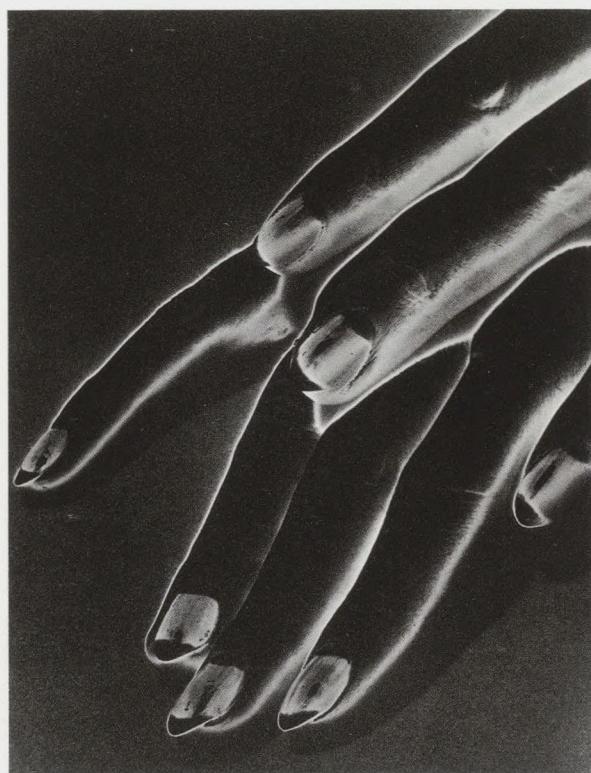


Fig. 12. Man Ray, *Untitled*, c. 1930. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of James Thrall Soby.



Fig. 13. Roger Parry, *Untitled*, 1930. Private collection, New York.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE SERVICE OF SURREALISM



Fig. 14. Maurice Tabard, *Untitled*, 1929. Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

directness, automatism makes the unconscious present. Automatism may be writing, but it is not representation. It is immediate to experience, untainted by the distance and exteriority of signs.

But this commitment to automatism and writing as a special modality of presence, and a consequent dislike of representation as a cheat, is not consistent in Breton. As we will see, Breton expressed a great enthusiasm for signs—and thus for representation—since representation is the very core of his definition of Convulsive Beauty, and Convulsive Beauty is another term for the Marvelous: the great talismanic concept at the heart of surrealism itself.

On the level of theory, these contradictions about the priorities of vision and representation, presence and sign, perform what the contradiction between the two poles of surrealist art manifests on the level of form. For the problem of how to forge some kind of stylistically coherent entity out of the apparent opposition between the abstract liquefaction of Miró's art, on the one hand, and the dry realism of Magritte or Dali, on the other, has continued to plague every writer—beginning with Breton himself—who has set out to define surrealist art.<sup>19</sup> Automatism and dream may seem coherent as parallel functions of unconscious activity, but give rise to image types that seem irreconcilably diverse.

It is within this confusion over the nature of surrealist art that the present investigation of surrealist photography should be placed. For to begin that investigation with the claim that surrealist photography is the great unknown, undervalued aspect of surrealist practice, but that nonetheless, it is the *great* production of the movement, is undoubtedly to write a kind of promissory note. Might not this work be the very key to the dilemma of surrealist style, the catalyst for the solution, the magnet that attracts and thereby organizes the particles in the field?

On the surface of things, this would seem a promise

impossible to keep. The very same diversity, so troubling to the art historian or critic who tries to think coherence into the contradictory condition of surrealist pictorial production, repeats itself within the corpus of the photographs. The range of stylistic options taken by the photographers is enormous. There are “straight” images, sharply focused and in close-up, which vary from the contemporaneous production of Neue Sachlichkeit or Bauhaus photography only in the peculiarity of their subjects—like Boiffard’s untitled photographs of big toes

(figs. 143, 144), or Dora Maar’s *Ubu* (1936), or Man Ray’s hands (fig. 11), or Mesens’ *As We Understand It* (*Comme nous l'entendons...*; fig. 15)—but sometimes, as in the images Brassaï made for *L'Amour fou*, not even in that (fig. 163). There are photographs that are not “straight” but are the result of combination printing, a darkroom maneuver that produces the irrational space of what could be taken to be the image of dreams. Some of these retain the crispness and definition of any contemporary Magritte or Dali; others, particularly those by Ubac (fig. 66), begin to slide into the fluid, melting condition that we associate more with the pictorial terms elaborated by Masson and Miró. And there were of course techniques associated directly with automatist procedures and the

courting of chance. Thus Ubac speaks of releasing photography from the “rationalist arrogance” that powered its discovery and identifying it with “the poetic movement of liberation” through “a process identical with that of automatism.”<sup>20</sup> Ubac’s *brûlages* (fig. 62), photographs in which the image is modified by melting the negative emulsion before printing, are thought to be one example of this;<sup>21</sup> Man Ray’s rayographs—cameraless “photograms” produced by placing objects directly on photographic paper, which is then exposed to light—can be seen as another (fig. 41). As Man Ray himself said, by “recalling the event more or less clearly, like the undisturbed ashes of an object consumed by flames,” the

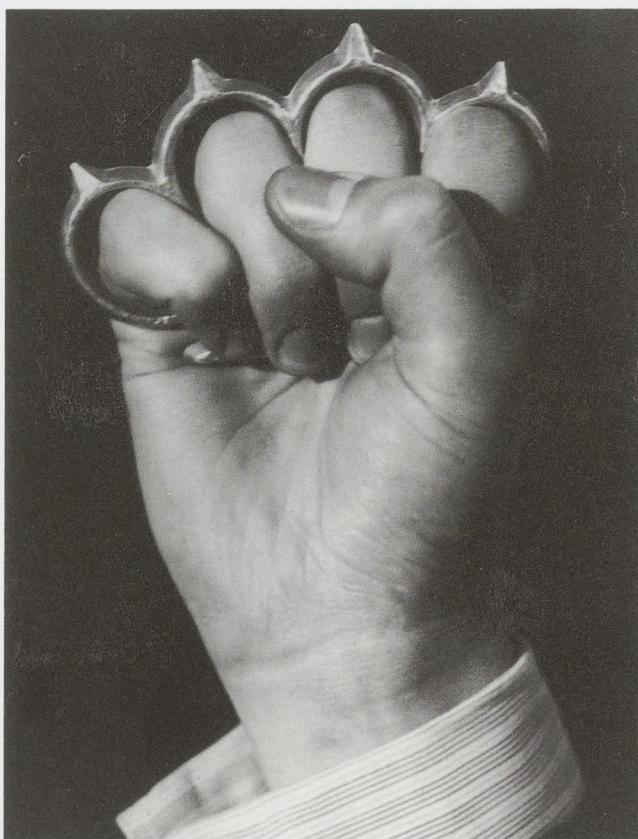


Fig. 15. E. L. T. Mesens, *As We Understand It (Comme ils l'entendent)*, 1926. Private collection.

rayographs seemed like those precipitates from the unconscious on which automatist poetic practice was founded.<sup>22</sup> The technical diversity of photographic surrealism does not end here. We must add solarization, negative printing, *cliché verre*, multiple exposure, photomontage, and photo collage, noting that within each of these technical categories there is the possibility of the same stylistic bifurcation (linear/painterly or representational/abstract) that surrealist painting exhibits.

Nowhere does this internal contradiction seem more immediately available than in the photo collage that André Breton made as a self-portrait, a work called *L'Écriture automatique* (fig. 3). For here in a single work is enshrined the very split for which these stylistic terms are the surrogates: vision/writing. Breton portrays himself with a microscope, an optical instrument invented to expand normal eyesight, to extend its powers in ways not unlike those associated with the camera itself. He is shown, that is to say, as the surrealist seer, armed with vision. But this condition of vision produces images, and these images are understood as a textual product, hence the title *Automatic Writing*.

There is, however, one important factor that must be added to any consideration of Breton's *Automatic Writing* before concluding that its contradictions are irreconcilable. It is a factor that allows one to think, as Breton seems to have been doing here, about the relationship between photography and writing. Normally we consider writing as absolutely banned from the photographic field, exiled by the very nature of the image—the “message without a code”—to an external location where language functions as the necessary interpreter of the muteness of the photographic sign.<sup>23</sup> This place is the caption, the very necessity of which produced the despair that Brecht, for example, felt about photography. Walter Benjamin cites this hostility to the “straight” photograph when he quotes Brecht's objection to the camera image: “A

photograph of the Krupp works or GEC yields almost nothing about these institutions . . . Therefore something has actively to be *constructed*, something artificial, something set-up.”<sup>24</sup> Throughout the avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s that something, that *constructed* photograph, was the photomontage, about which it could be claimed that it “expresses not simply the fact which it shows, but also the social tendency expressed by the fact.”<sup>25</sup> And this notion of the montage's insistence upon meaning, on a sense of reality bearing its own interpretation,

was articulated by Aragon's reception of the work of the revolutionary artist John Heartfield: “As he was playing with the fire of appearance, reality took fire around him. . . . The scraps of photographs that he formerly manoeuvred for the pleasure of stupefaction, under his fingers begin to *signify*.” The possibility of signification that Aragon saw in Heartfield seems to have been understood as a function of the agglomerative, constructed medium of photo collage. Referring in another context to the separate collage elements of Ernst's montages, Aragon compared them to “words.”<sup>26</sup>

In what sense, we might ask, could the very act of collage/montage be thought of as textual—as it seems to have been so thought by these writers? And is this a logic

that can resolve what is contradictory in *L'Écriture automatique*?

*Objects metamorphosed before my very eyes; they did not assume an allegorical stance or the personality of symbols; they seemed less the outgrowths of an idea than the idea itself.*

—Louis Aragon<sup>27</sup>

If these works were able to “signify,” to articulate reality through a kind of language, this was a function of the cellular structure that montage exploits, with its emphatic gaps between one shard of reality and another, gaps that

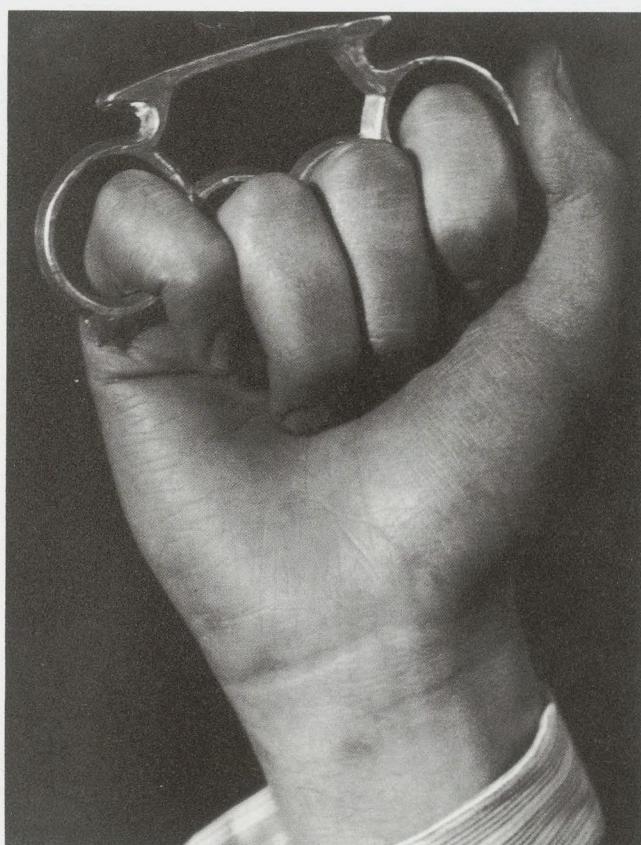


Fig. 16. E. L. T. Mesens, *As They Understand It (Comme nous l'entendons)*, 1926. Private collection.

L'AMOUR FOU

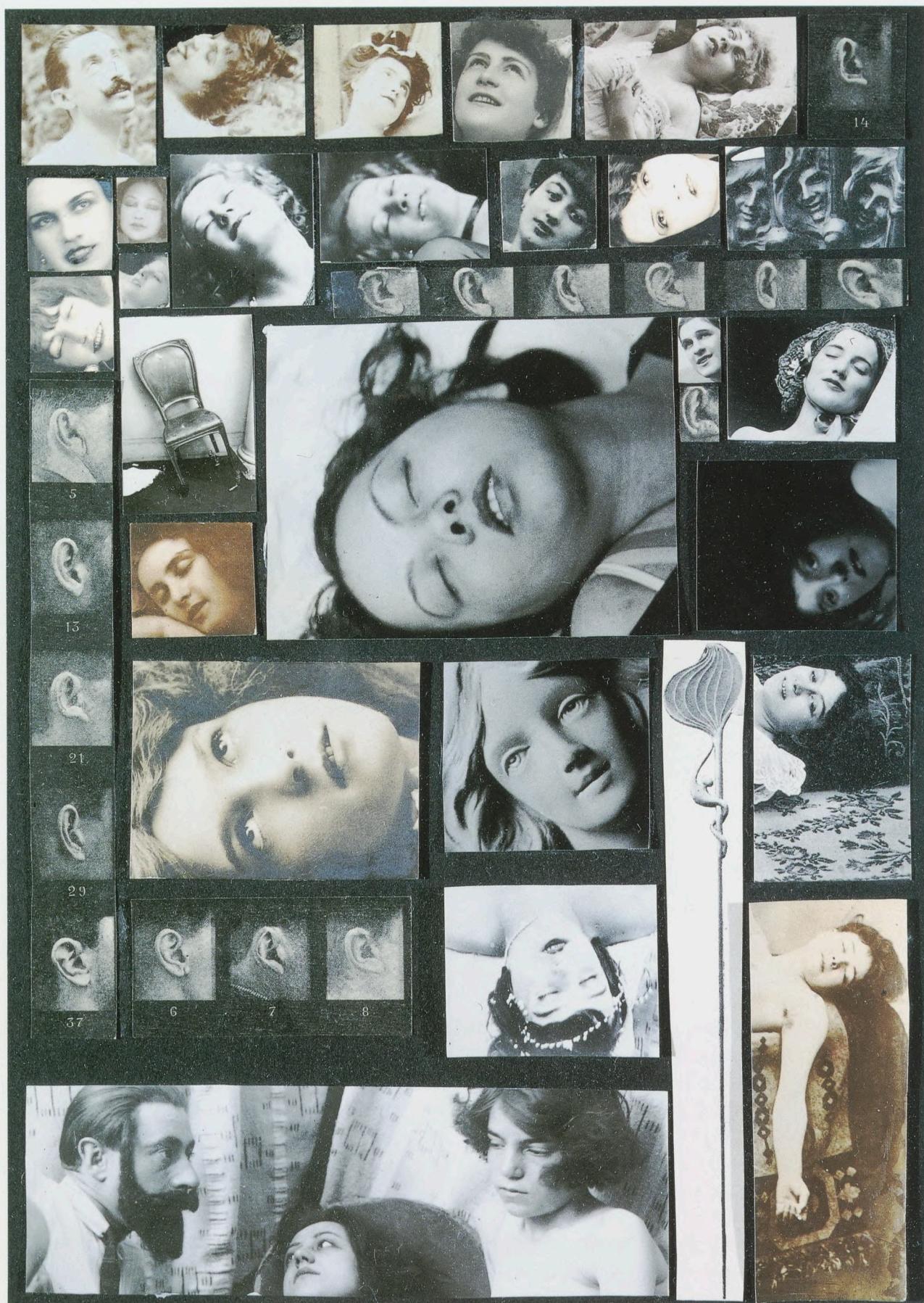


Fig. 17. Salvador Dalí, *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy* (*Le Phénomène de l'extase*), 1933. Manoukian Collection, Paris.

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Fig. 18. Georges Hugnet, *Untitled*, c. 1947. Manoukian Collection, Paris.

in the montages from the early 1920s by the dadaists Hannah Höch or Raoul Hausmann left rivers of white paper to flow around the individual photographic units. For this cell construction mimics not the look of words but the formal preconditions of signs: the fact that they require a fundamental exteriority between one another. In language this exteriority manifests itself as syntax, and syntax in turn is both a system of connection between the elements of a language, and a system of separation, of maintaining the difference between one sign and the next, of creating meaning through the syntactical condition of spacing.

By leaving the blanks or gaps or spaces of the page to show, dada montage traded in the powerful resource of photographic realism for the quality that we could call the "language effect." Normally, photography is as far as possible from creating such an effect. For photography, with its technical basis in an instantaneous recording of an event, captures what we could call the simultaneity of real space, the fact that space does not present itself to us as successive in nature, like time, but as pure presence, present-all-at-once. By carrying on its continuous surface the trace or imprint of all that vision captures in one glance, photography normally functions as a kind of declaration of the seamlessness of reality itself. It is this seamlessness that dada photo collage disrupts in an attempt to infiltrate reality with interpretation, with signification, with the very writing to which Breton refers in his own collage: *écriture automatique*. It is this seamlessness of the photographic field that is fractured and segmented in Dali's extraordinary collage *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy* (*Le Phénomène de l'extase*; fig. 17) as well, and with the similar production of the language effect. For, within the grid that organizes the ecstatic images of women, we find the inclusion of strips of different ears, taken from the catalogue of anatomical parts assembled by master police chief Alphonse Bertillon that stands as the nineteenth-century criminological attempt to use photography to construct the "*portrait parlant*," or speaking likeness, witness to the last century's expectation that, like other "mediums," photography could wrest a message from the muteness of material reality.

If photo collage set up a relationship between photography and "language," it did so at the sacrifice of photography's privileged connection to the world. This is why the surrealist photographers, for the most part, shunned the collage technique, seeming to have found in it a too-willing surrender of photography's hold on the real. Darkroom processes like combination printing and double exposure were preferred to scissors and paste.

For these techniques could preserve the seamless surface of the final print and thus reenforce the sense that this image, being a photograph, documents the reality from which it is a transfer. But, at the same time, this image, internally riven by the effects of syntax—of spacing—would imply nonetheless that it is reality that has composed itself as a sign.

To convulse reality from within, to demonstrate it as fractured by spacing, became the collective result of all that vast range of techniques to which surrealist photographers resorted and which they understood as producing the characteristics of the sign. For example, solarization—in which photographic paper is briefly exposed to light during the printing process, thereby altering in varying degrees the relationship of dark and light tones, introducing elements of the photographic negative into the positive print—creates a strange effect of *cloisonné*, which visually walls off parts of a single space or a whole body from one another, establishing in this way a kind of testimony to a cloven reality. Negative printing, which produces an entirely negative print, with the momentarily unintelligible gaps that it creates within objects, promotes the same effect. But nothing creates this sense of the linguistic hold on the real more than the photographic strategy of doubling. For it is doubling that produces the formal rhythm of spacing—the two-step that banishes simultaneity. And it is doubling that elicits the notion that to an original has been added its copy. The double is the simulacrum, the second, the representative of the original. It comes after the first, and in this following it can only exist as figure, or image. But in being seen in conjunction with the original, the double destroys the pure singularity of the first. Through duplication, it opens the original to the effect of difference, of deferral, of one-thing-after-another.

This sense of opening reality to deferral is one form of spacing. But doubling does something else besides transmute presence into succession. It also marks the first in the chain as a signifying element—which is to say, doubling transforms raw matter into the conventional shape of the signifier. Linguistics describes this effect of doubling in terms of an infant's progress from babbling to speech. For babbling produces phonemic elements as mere noise as opposed to what happens when one phoneme is doubled by another. *Papa* is a word rather than only a random repetition of the sound *pa* because "The reduplication indicates intent on the part of the speaker; it endows the second syllable with a function different from that which would have been performed by the first separately, or in the form of a potentially limitless series of identical sounds /papapapa/ produced

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Fig. 19. Maurice Tabard, *Untitled*, c. 1930. Collection Roger Therond, Paris.

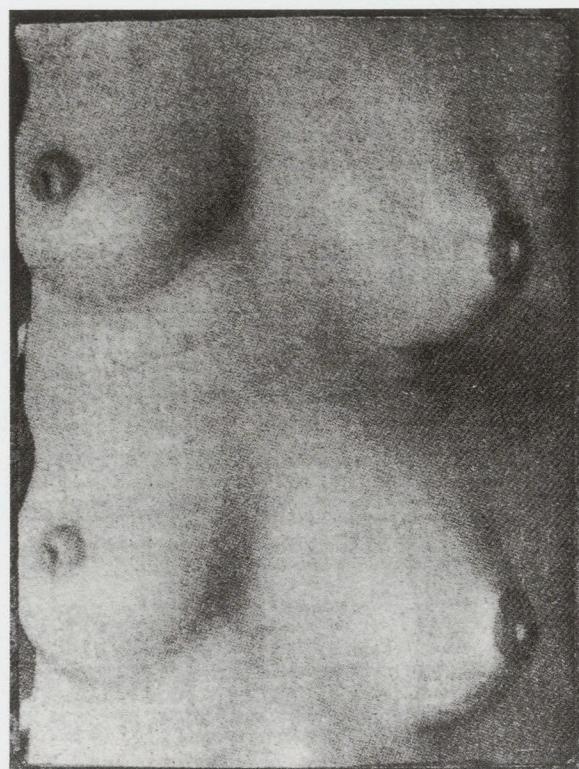


Fig. 20. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1924. Published in *La Revolution surréaliste*.

by mere babbling. Therefore the second /pa/ is not a repetition of the first, nor has it the same signification. It is a sign that, like itself, the first /pa/ too was a sign, and that as a pair they fall into the category of signifiers, not of things signified."<sup>28</sup>

Repetition is thus the indicator that the wild sounds of babbling have been rendered deliberate, intentional, and that what they intend is meaning. Doubling is in this sense the "signifier of signification."

Within surrealist photography, doubling also functions as the signifier of signification. It is this semiological, rather than stylistic, condition that unites the vast array of the movement's photographic production. As we observe the various technical options explored by surrealist photography, moving from unmanipulated straight photography, to negative printing, to solarization, to montage, to rayography, there is the constant preoccupation with doubling. We come to realize that this is not only a thematic concern, it is a structural one. For the structure of the double produces the mark of the sign.

We find this within Hans Bellmer's *Dolls* (*Poupées*, 1936), where the mechanically duplicated parts of a doll's anatomy allow for a doubling of these doubles and the doll herself can be composed of identical pairs of legs mirroring each other (figs. 23, 24). This can happen within the very construction of the doll, or from the doll's momentary arrangement for a given photo session, or through paired prints of near-twin images (figs. 21, 22). All of these are rendered through techniques of documentary photography in which manipulation is studiously avoided. But at other points in Bellmer's production, the doubling can manifest itself technically within the image, as in the double exposures that multiply the multiples. Double exposure functions in Man Ray's work to produce, for example, the famous doubling of the eyes of the *Marquise Cassati* (figs. 121, 122). That photographs, multiple by nature, can themselves be doubled makes further doubling available, as in the stacking of images. Man Ray's collage of doubled breasts (fig. 20) in the opening number of *La Révolution surréaliste* (1924) serves as one example, or, again, Frederick Sommer's similarly doubled landscapes reproduced in the American surrealist journal *VVV* (1944), or Man Ray's doubles in rayographic form, as the mass-produced, multiple object of the phonograph record (manufactured of translucent plastic in the days when this work was made) is paired and thereby twinned (fig. 42). The *Distortions*, which André Kertész made in 1933, exploit the doubling of the mirror to create a series dedicated to this effect.

As we noted before, surrealist photography exploits the very special connection to reality with which all

photography is endowed. Photography is an imprint or transfer of the real; it is a photochemically processed trace causally connected to that thing in the world to which it refers in a way parallel to that of fingerprints or footprints or the rings of water that cold glasses leave on tables. The photograph is thus genetically distinct from painting or sculpture or drawing. On the family tree of images it is closer to palm prints, death masks, cast shadows, the Shroud of Turin, or the tracks of gulls on beaches. Technically and semiologically speaking, drawing and paintings are icons, while photographs are indexes.<sup>29</sup>

Given photography's special status with regard to the real—that is, being a kind of deposit of the real itself—the manipulations wrought by the surrealist photographers, the spacings and doublings, are intended to register the spacings and doublings of *that* very reality of which *this* photograph is merely the faithful trace. In this way the photographic medium is exploited to produce a paradox: the paradox of reality constituted as a sign—or presence transformed into absence, into representation, into spacing, into writing. In this semiological move surrealist photography parallels a similar move of Breton's. For Breton, though he promoted as surrealist a vast heterogeneity of pictorial styles, devised a definition of beauty that is rather more unified and that is itself translatable into semiological terms. Beauty, he said, should be convulsive.

In explaining the nature of that convulsion in the text that serves as prologue to *L'Amour fou*, Breton spells out the process of reality contorting or convulsing itself into its apparent opposite, namely, a sign.<sup>30</sup> Reality, which is present, becomes a sign for what is absent, so that the world itself, rendered beautiful, is understood as a "forest of signs." In defining what he means by this "*indice*," this sign, Breton begins to sketch a theory not of painting, but of photography.

Each of Breton's aspects or moments of convulsive beauty are ways of describing the action of signs. The first—"érotique-voilée"—invokes the occurrence in nature of representation, as one animal imitates another or as inorganic matter shapes itself to look like statuary. The second, termed "*explosante-fixe*," is related to the "expiration of movement," which is to say the experience of something that should be in motion but has been, for some reason, stopped, derailed, or as Duchamp would have said, "delayed." In this regard Breton writes, "I am sorry not to be able to reproduce, among the illustrations to this text, a photograph of a very handsome locomotive after it had been abandoned for many years to the delirium of a virgin forest."<sup>31</sup> The convulsiveness, then,

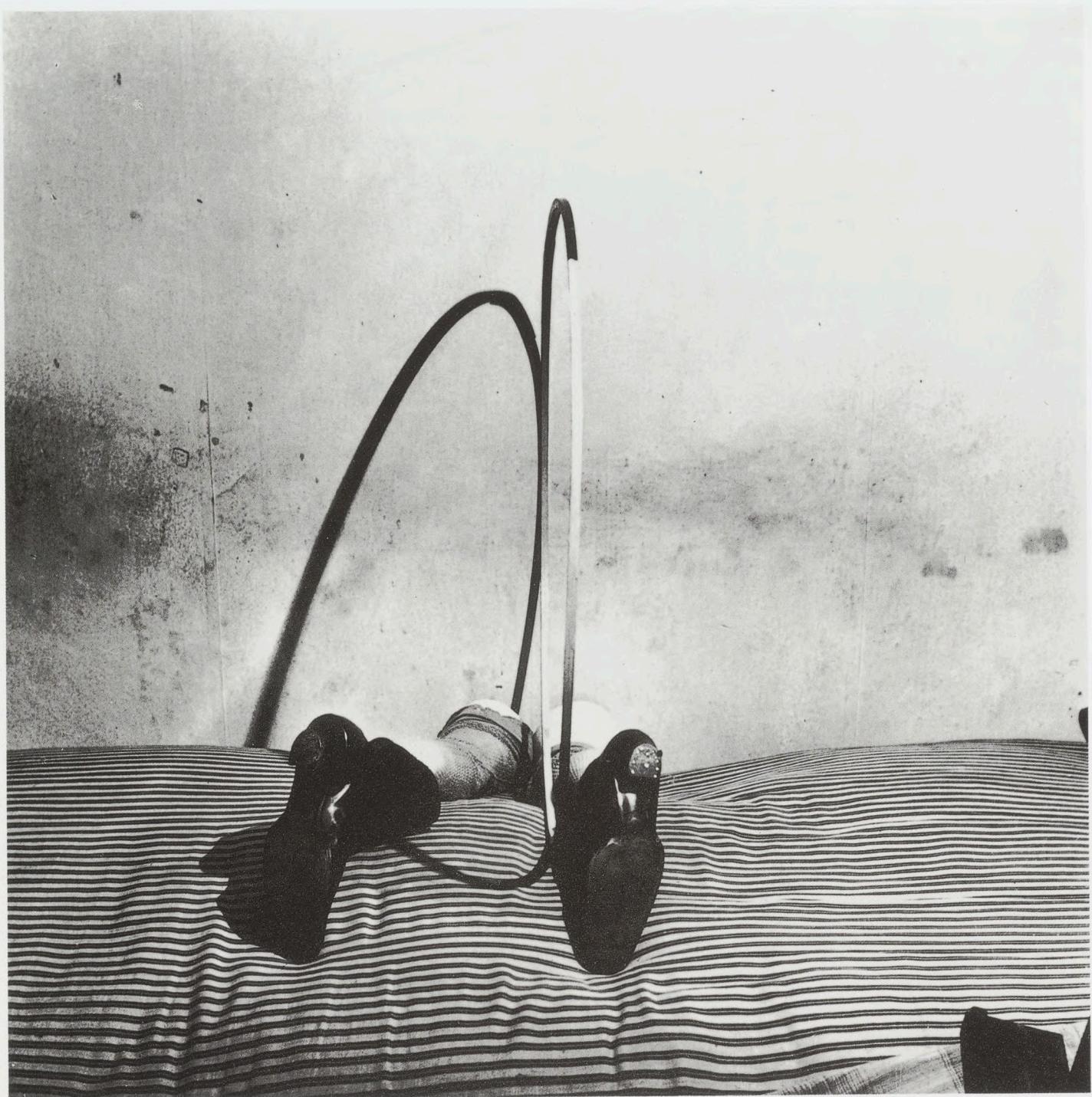


Fig. 21. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1935. Collection François Petit, Paris.

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Fig. 22. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1935. Collection Francois Petit, Paris.

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Fig. 23. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1935.  
Collection François Petit, Paris.



Fig. 24. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1935.  
Collection François Petit, Paris.

the arousal in front of the object is not to it perceived within the continuum of its natural existence, but detached from that flow by means of an expiration of motion, a detachment that deprives the locomotive of some part of its physical self and turns it into a sign of the reality it no longer possesses.

Breton's third example of convulsive beauty—"magique-circonstancielle"—consists of the found object or found verbal fragment, both instances of objective chance, where (specifically in the case of the found object) an emissary from the external world carries a message informing the recipient of his own desire. The found object is a *sign* of that desire. Breton recognized this kind of convulsive beauty in a slipper spoon he had found in a flea market, an object he recognized as the fulfillment of a wish spoken by the automatic phrase that had begun running through his mind some months before. The phrase, *cendriller-Cendrillon*, translates as "Cinderella ashtray." The flea-market object—a spoon with a little shoe affixed to the underside of its handle—suddenly convulsed itself into a sign when Breton began to see it as a chain of representations in which the "shoe" was reduplicated to infinity, as though caught in a hall of mirrors (fig. 1). In addition to the little shoe under the handle, he suddenly saw the bowl and handle of the spoon as the front and last of another shoe, of which the little carved slipper was only the heel. Then he imagined that slipper as having for its heel yet another slipper and so on to infinity. This chain of reduplicated and mirrored slippers Breton read as a kind of natural writing, a set of "*indices*" that signified his own desire for love and the beginning of a quest whose magical unfolding is plotted throughout *L'Amour fou*.

If we are to generalize the aesthetic of surrealism, the concept of convulsive beauty is at the core of its aesthetic, a concept that reduces to an experience of reality transformed into representation. Surreality *is*, we could say, nature convulsed into a kind of writing. The special access that photography, as a medium, has to this experience is photography's privileged connection to the real. The manipulations then available to photography—

what we have been calling doubling and spacing as well as a technique of representational reduplication, or structure *en abyme*—appear to document these convulsions. The photographs are not *interpretations* of reality, decoding it as in the photomontage practice of Heartfield or Hausmann. Instead, they are presentations of that very reality as configured or coded or written.

The experience of nature as sign or representation comes naturally, then, to photography. This experience extends as well to the domain that is most inherently photographic: the framing edge of the image experienced as cut or cropped. This is possible even when the image

does not seem folded from within by means of the reduplicative strategy of doubling, when the image is entirely unmanipulated, like the Boiffard big toes (figs. 143, 144), or the *Involuntary Sculptures* (fig. 10) by Brassaï, or the image of a hatted figure by Man Ray published in *Minotaure* (fig. 26).<sup>32</sup> For, at the very boundary of the image, the camera frame, which essentially crops or cuts the represented element out of reality at large, can be seen as another example of spacing.

Spacing, like the doubled phonemes of *papa*, is the signifier of signification, the indication of a break in the simultaneous experience of the real, a rupture that issues into sequence. Photographic cropping is always experienced as a rupture in the con-

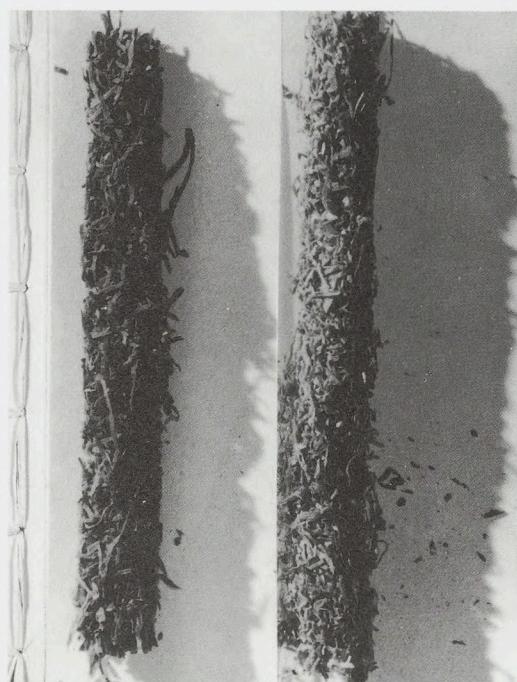


Fig. 25. Marcel Duchamp, *Untitled* (for cover of 7eme Face du dé), 1936.  
Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

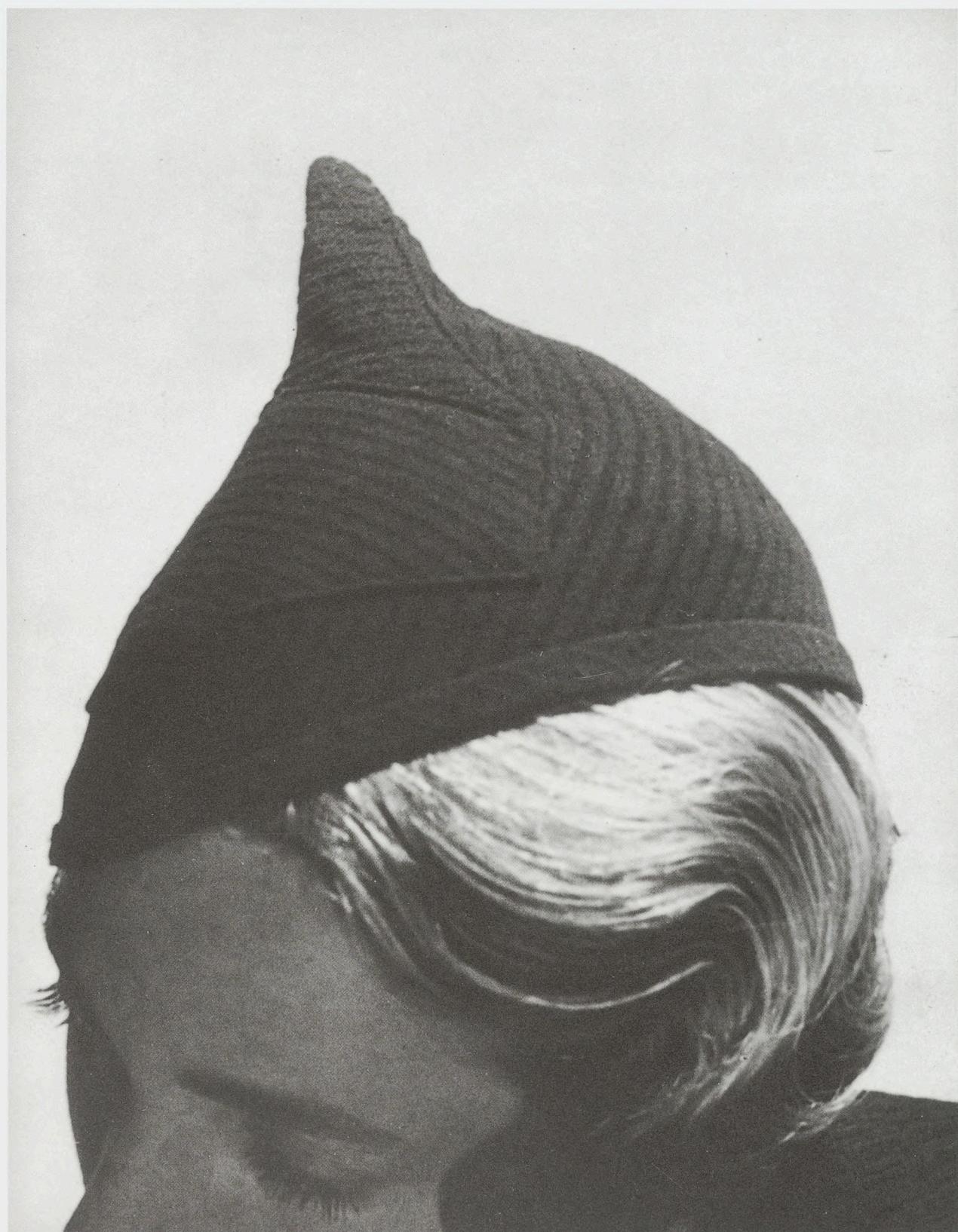
tinuous fabric of reality. But surrealist photography puts enormous pressure on that frame to make it itself read as a sign—an empty sign, it is true, but an integer in the calculus of meaning nonetheless, a signifier of signification. The frame announces that, between the part of reality cut away and this part, there is a difference; and that this segment, which the frame frames, is an example of nature-as-representation or nature-as-sign. Even as it announces this experience of reality, the camera frame, of course, controls it, configures it.<sup>33</sup> This it does by point of view, as in the Man Ray, or focal length, as in the extreme close-ups of Brassaï. But in both these instances what the camera frames, and thereby makes visible, is the automatic writing of the world: the constant, uninterrupted production of signs. Brassaï's images are of those nasty pieces of paper, like bus tickets

Fig. 26. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1933. Collection Rosabianca Skira, Geneva.



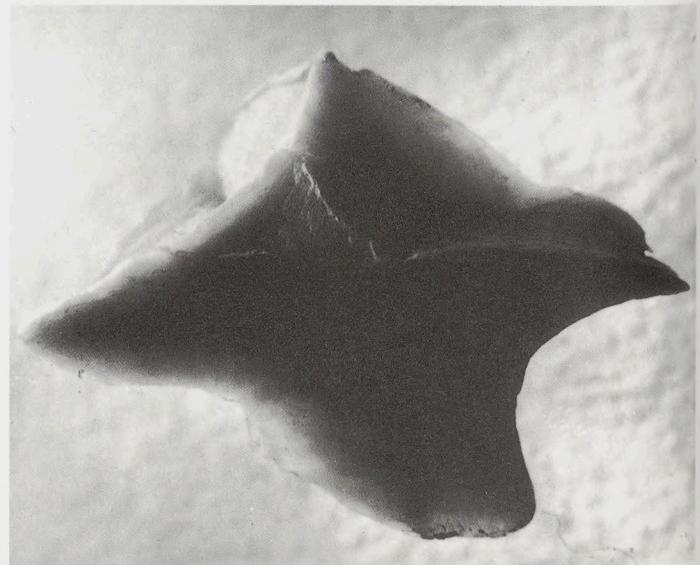
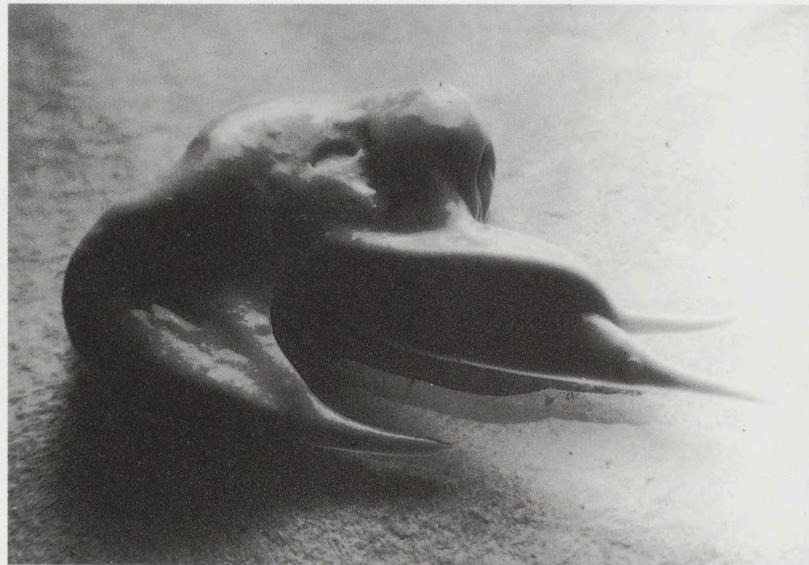
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Fig. 27. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1933. Collection Rosabianca Skira, Geneva.

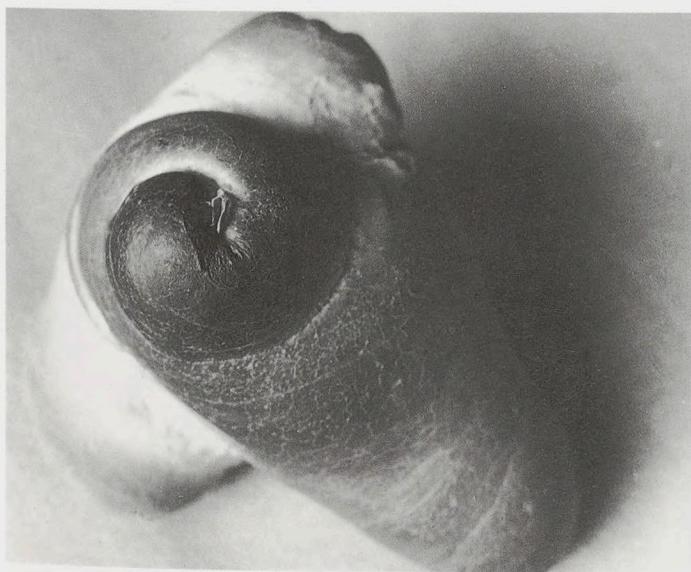


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Figs. 28–31. Brassai, *Involuntary Sculpture (Sculpture involontaire)*, 1933.  
Collection Rosabianca Skira, Geneva.



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and theater-ticket stubs that we roll into little columns in our pockets or those pieces of eraser that we unconsciously knead—these are what his camera produces through the enlargements that he published as involuntary sculptures. Man Ray's photograph is one of several made to accompany an essay by dada's founding spirit, Tristan Tzara, about the constant unconscious production of sexual imagery throughout culture—here, in the design of hats.

The frame announces the camera's ability to find and isolate what we could call the world's constant production of erotic symbols, its ceaseless automatic writing. In this capacity the frame can itself be glorified, noticed, represented, as in the Man Ray monument to the Marquis

de Sade. Or it can be there silently, operating as spacing, as in Brassai's seizure of automatic production through his images of sculptural onanism or his captured graffiti.

In cutting into the body of the world, stopping it, framing it, spacing it, photography reveals that world as written. Surrealist vision and photographic vision cohere around these principles. For in the *explosante-fixe* we discover the stop-motion of the still photograph; in the *érotique-voilé* we see its framing; and in the *magique-circonstancielle* we find the message of its spacing. Breton has thus provided us all the aesthetic theory we will ever need to understand that, for surrealist photography, too, "beauty will be convulsive or it will not be."

1. André Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969), p. 12.

2. André Breton, "Le Surrealisme et la peinture," *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 4 (July 1925), p. 28. The complete series of essays was collected in Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York: Harper & Row, 1972). Further references are to this translation.

3. Breton, *Manifestos*, p. 7.

4. André Breton, *Nadja*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 152. In the preface to the 1963 French edition (Gallimard), Breton speaks of the photographs in relation to one of the "antiliterary" principles that guided the creation of the book. "The abundant photographic illustration," he writes, "had as its objective the elimination of all description—what had been chided as inane in the *Surrealist Manifesto*—and the tone that the narrative adopted was modeled on that of medical observation . . ." See Michel Beaujour, "Qu'est-ce que 'Nadja'?" *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, no. 172 (April 1, 1967), pp. 780–99, for an analysis of *Nadja*'s condition as a "text" that is open to additions from what would normally be viewed as *hors-texte* and the role the photographs play in this regard.

5. This question had begun, "The photographic print . . . is permeated with an emotive value that makes it a supremely precious article of exchange" (*Surrealism and Painting*, p. 32).

6. André Breton, "La Beauté sera convulsive . . .," *Minotaure*, no. 5 (1934), pp. 9–16. Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," in *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 183. See Rosalind Krauss, "Nightwalkers," *Art Journal* 45 (Spring 1981): 33–38.

7. In the stress that both this introduction to the subject of surrealist photography and my subsequent essay in this volume, "Corpus Delicti," place on Man Ray's centrality to the surrealist photographic aesthetic, I am in a certain condition of disagreement with the position taken by Jane Livingston, who, in her essay on Man Ray, argues that his photography is highly significant for surrealism without, however, being typically surrealist.

8. Breton, *Manifestos*, p. 16.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

10. Besides the famous "dictionary" definition of surrealism ("n. Psychic automatism in its pure state . . ."), Breton's first *Surrealist Manifesto* includes an "encyclopedia" entry in which the performers of acts of "absolute surrealism" are listed: Aragon, Baron, Boiffard, Breton, Carrive, Crevel, Delteil, Desnos, Eluard, Gérard, Limbour, Malkine, Morise, Naville, Noll, Péret, Picon, Soupault, Vitrac.

11. Pierre Naville, "Beaux-Arts," *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 3 (April 1925), p. 27.

12. As told to the author in conversation, May 20, 1983. Naville also said that it was he who devised the three-pronged photo collage of the members at the Centrale for the cover of the first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*. See his account in Pierre Naville, *Le Temps du surréal* (Paris: Galilée, 1977), pp. 99–110.

13. Naville, "Beaux-Arts," p. 27.

14. The quotations in this and the next paragraph are from Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, pp. 68, 70.

15. André Breton, "Océanie," (1948), reprinted in Breton, *La Clé des champs* (Paris: Sagittaire, 1953; 1973 edition), p. 278.

16. Breton here reenacts the polarization between speech and writing, presence and representation, that Derrida analyzes as the

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Fig. 32. Man Ray, *Dora Maar*, 1936. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

oppositions that structure Western metaphysics. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). The concept of spacing developed there (pp. 65–73) and in "Freud and the Scene of Writing" (in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978]) is important for the discussion that follows.

17. Thus Breton insists that "any form of expression in which automatism does not at least advance undercover runs a grave risk of moving out of the surrealist orbit" (*Surrealism and Painting*, p. 68).

18. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

19. William Rubin attempts to construct an "*intrinsic definition of Surrealist painting*" in his essay "Toward a Critical Framework," *Artforum* 5 (September 1966): 35. But because he reproduces the same bipolar or bivalent conceptual structure that Breton had established in 1925, his definition mirrors the problems of Breton's as well.

20. See Camille Bryen and Raoul Michelet, *Actuation poétique* (1935; reprinted in Marcel Marien, *L'Activité surréaliste en Belgique* [Brussels: Lebeer-Hossmann, 1979], pp. 269–70).

21. Ubac describes the procedure of *brûlage*, also called *soufflage*, as a system of placing the glass plate of an exposed negative over a heated pan of water in order to melt the emulsion: "It was thus an automatism of destruction, a complete dissolution of the image towards an absolute formlessness. I treated a large number of my negatives in this manner—the result being for the most part disappointing, except in one case where a woman in a bathing suit was transformed into a thunderstruck Goddess—a photo titled 'La Nébuleuse.'" (In an unpublished letter to Yves Gevaert from Raoul Ubac, dated Dieudonné, 21 March, 1981.) The analysis of *La Nébuleuse* in "Corpus Delicit" places the emphasis on the concept of formlessness, and thus on the destructive character of this process rather than the usual idea of automatism as productive.

22. Man Ray, *Exhibition Rayographs 1921–1928* (Stuttgart: L. G. A., 1963).
23. "Message without a code" is Barthes's term in his essays "The Photographic Message" and "Rhetoric of the Image." See Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).
24. In Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," trans. Stanley Mitchell, *Screen 13* (Spring 1972): 24.
25. John Heartfield, *Photomontages of the Nazi Period* (New York: Universe Books, 1977), p. 26.
26. Louis Aragon, "John Heartfield et la beauté révolutionnaire" (1935), reprinted in Aragon, *Les Collages* (Paris: Hermann, 1965), pp. 78–79.
27. *Nightwalker (Le Paysan de Paris)*, trans. Frederick Brown (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 94.
28. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. J. and D. Weightman (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 339–40.
29. Photography's position as an index was first established by C. S. Peirce within the taxonomy of signs that he developed in "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs," C. S. Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955).
30. The text "La beauté sera convulsive" (*op. cit.*) became the first chapter of *L'Amour fou*. See André Breton, *L'Amour fou* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937), pp. 7–19.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
32. Boiffard's big toes accompanied the text by Georges Bataille, "Le Gros Orteil," *Documents*, no. 6 (1929); Brassaï's *Sculptures 1 Involontaires* appeared in *Minotaure*, nos. 3–4 (1933), p. 68; Man Ray's photographs of hats illustrated Tristan Tzara's "D'un Certain Automatisme du gout," *Minotaure*, nos. 3–4 (1933), pp. 81–84.
33. Derrida analyzes the frame as "an outside which is called inside the inside to constitute it as inside." See Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon," trans. Craig Owens, *October*, no. 9 (Summer 1979).

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Fig. 33. Maurice Tabard, *Untitled*, c. 1930. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

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Fig. 34. Raoul Ubac, Reconstitution of an Automatic Drawing of C. Bryen  
(Reconstitution d'un dessin automatique de C. Bryen), 1935. Private collection.

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Fig. 35. Max Ernst, *Health through Sports (La Santé par la sport)*, c. 1920.  
Domenique de Menil Collection, Houston.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 36. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1934. Collection John Waddell, New York.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE SERVICE OF SURREALISM



Fig. 37. Anonymous, nineteenth century. Collection Yves Gevaert, Brussels.

L'AMOUR FOU

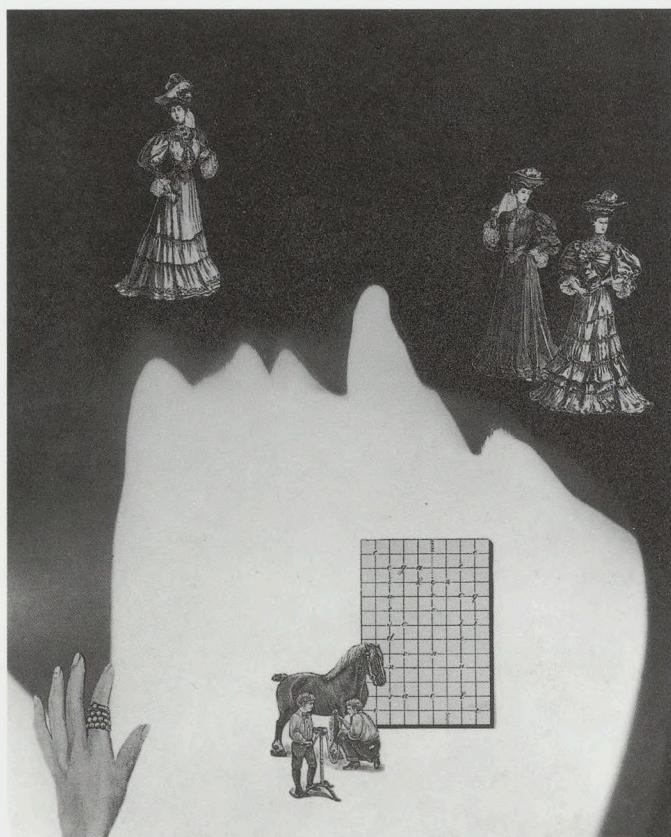


Fig. 38. E. L. T. Mesens, *I Think Only of You* (*Je ne pense qu'à vous*), 1926. Private collection.

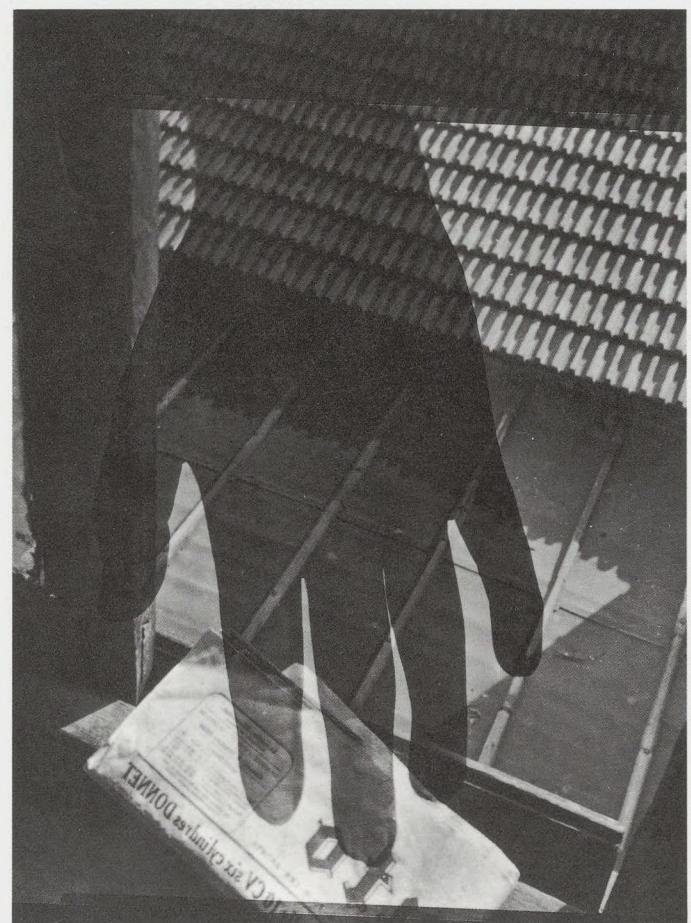


Fig. 39. Maurice Tabard, *Untitled*, 1929.  
Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE SERVICE OF SURREALISM



Fig. 40. Roger Parry, *Untitled (for Banalités)*, 1929. Art Institute of Chicago, Julien Levy Collection.

L'AMOUR FOU

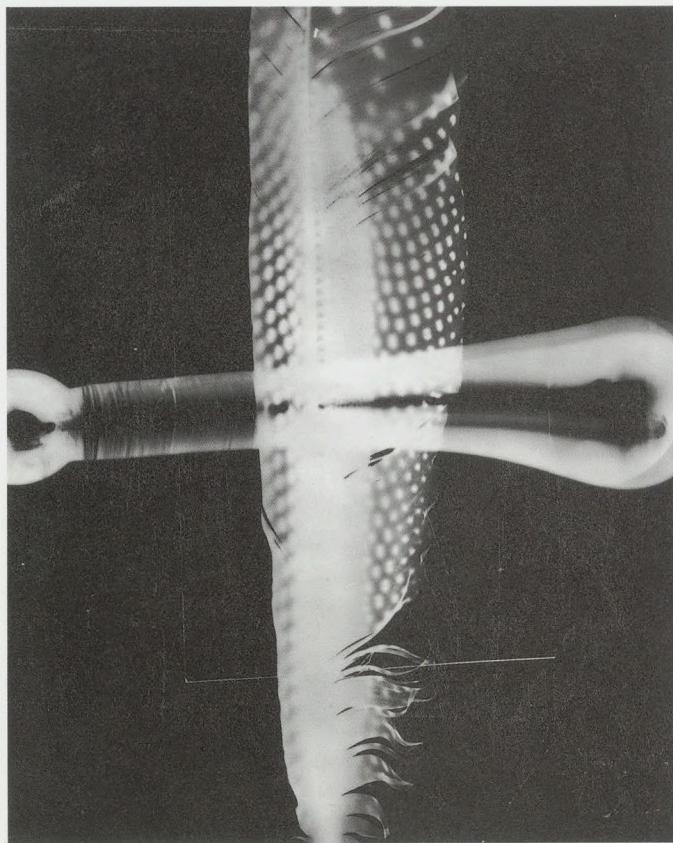


Fig. 41. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1923. Art Institute of Chicago, Julien Levy Collection.

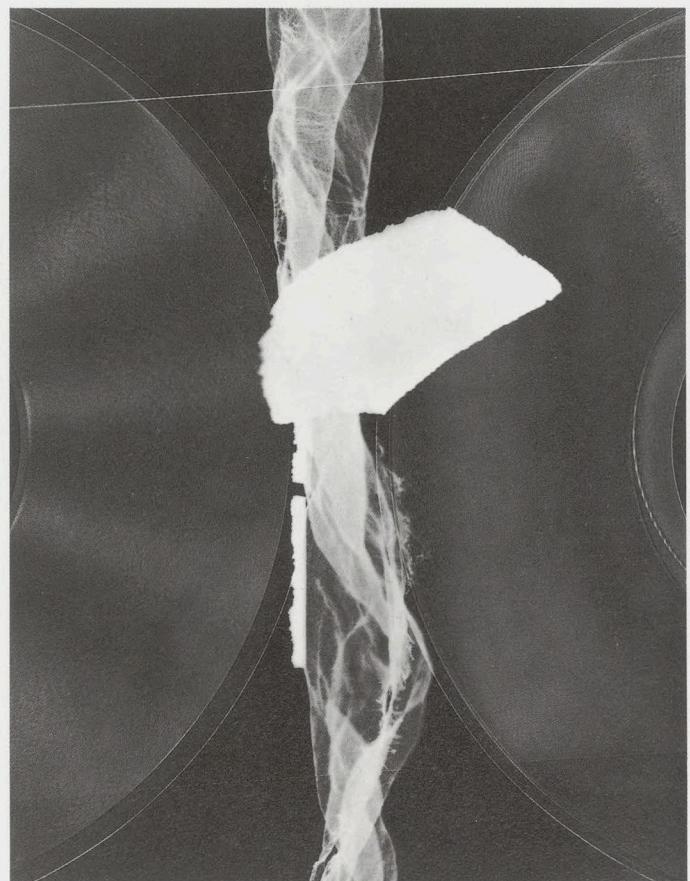
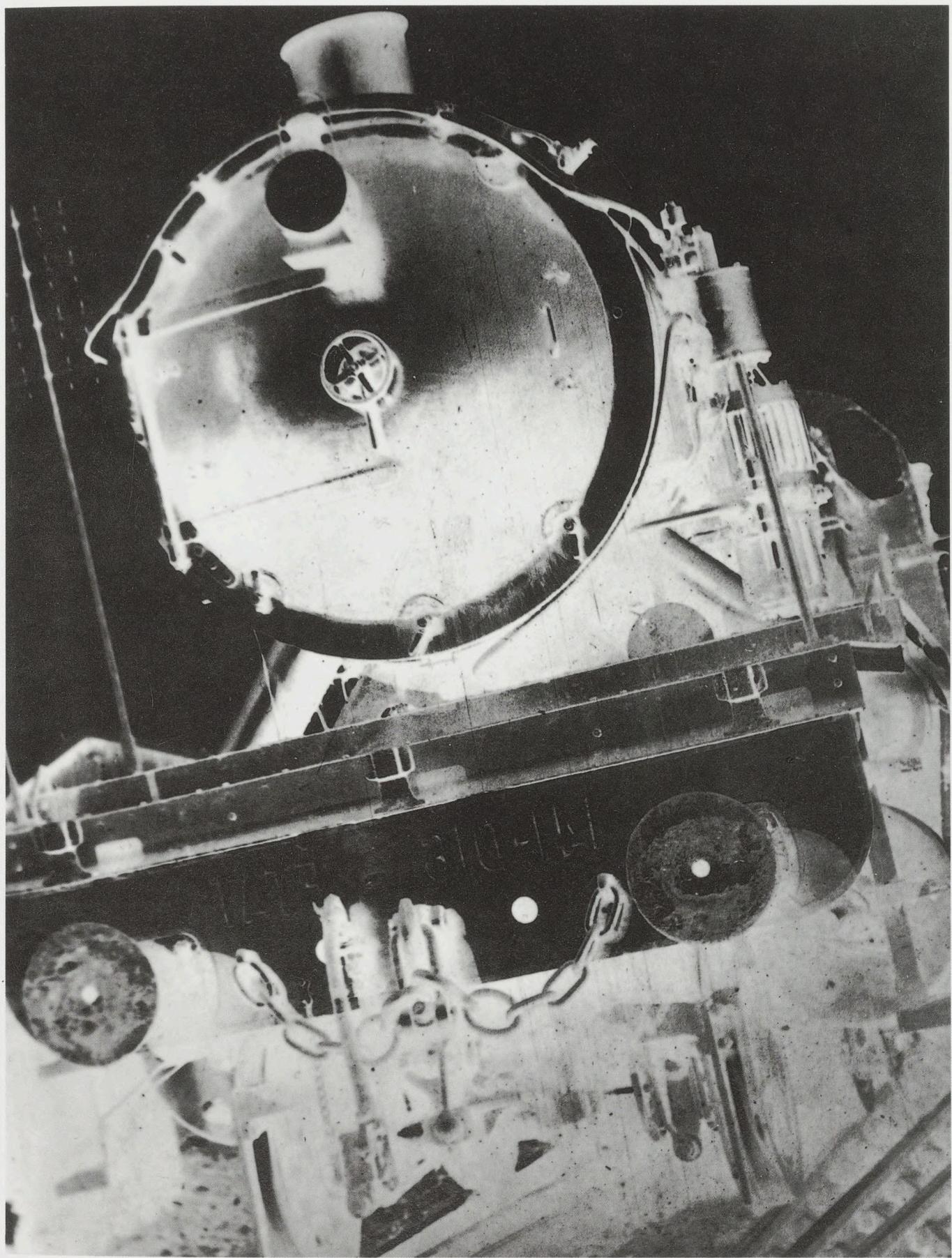


Fig. 42. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1923. Art Institute of Chicago, Julien Levy Collection.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE SERVICE OF SURREALISM



L'AMOUR FOU





Fig. 44. Hans Bellmer, *Untitled*, 1934. Private collection, Paris.

Fig. 45. Hans Bellmer, *Untitled*, 1934. Private collection, Paris.

Fig. 46. Hans Bellmer, *Untitled*, 1934. Private collection, Paris.

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Fig. 47. Raoul Ubac, *Sleeping Nude (Nu couché)*, 1939. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.

for Denis Hollier

*Corpus Delicti*

Rosalind Krauss

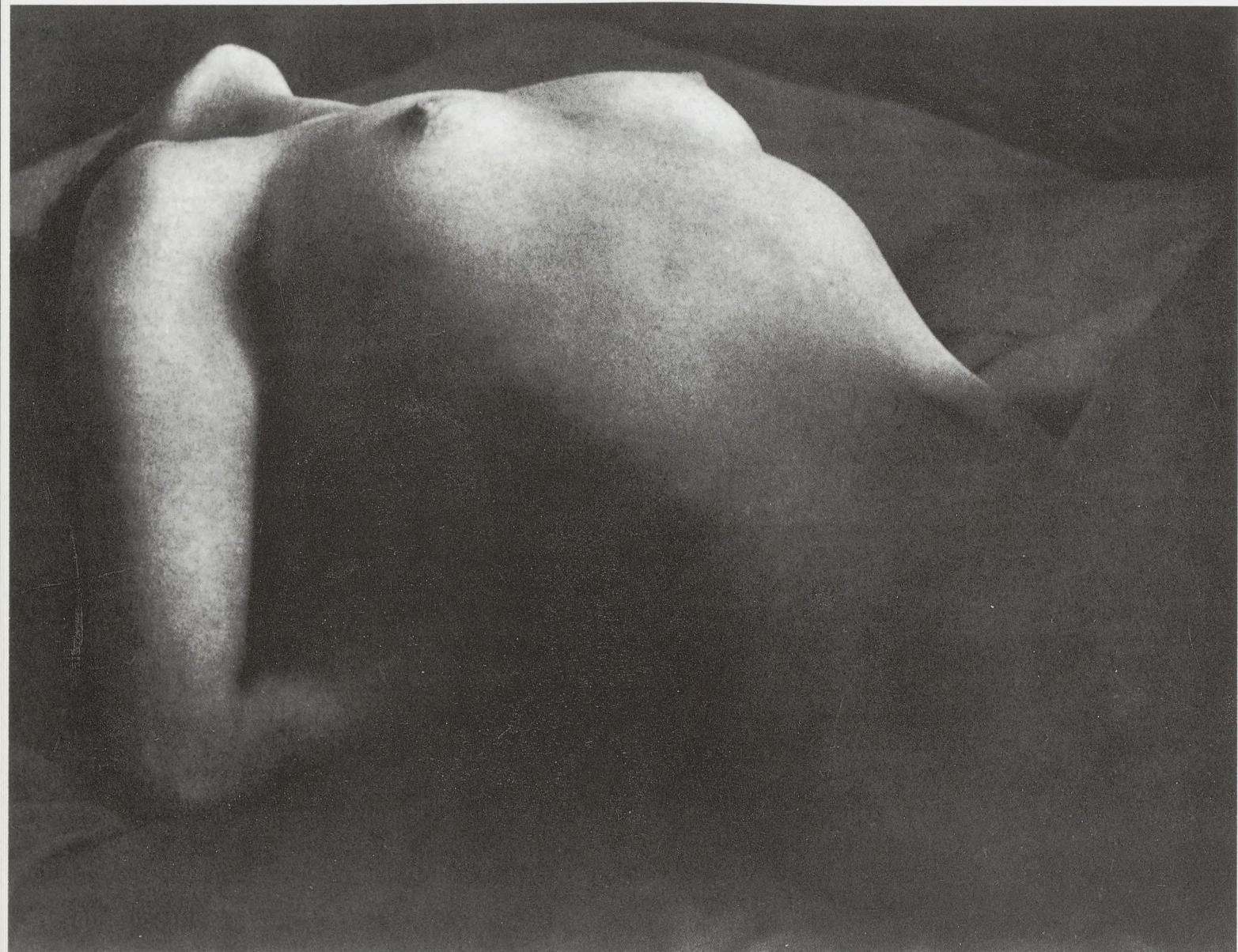


Fig. 48. Brassaï, *Untitled*, 1933. Published in *Minotaure*.

*The smoker puts the last touch to his work  
He seeks unity between himself and the landscape*

—André Breton<sup>1</sup>

A prominent surrealist painter, writing in 1933, imagines the following scene: A man is staring dreamily at a luminous point, thinking it a star, only rudely to awaken when he realizes it is merely the tip of a burning cigarette. This man is then told that the cigarette end is in fact the only visible point of an immense "psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic object," knowledge, our writer assures us, that will instantly cause that banal point of burning ash to "recover all its irrational glamour, and its most incontestable and dizzying powers of seduction."

These objects—psycho, atmospheric, and anamorphic—we have already been told, are complex reconstructions, made in the dark, of an original object chosen in the dark from among many others. Allowed to drop (still in the dark) from a ninety-foot height, to render it unrecognizable even if able to be seen, the reconstruction is then photographed. Without anyone having looked at it, the photograph is then sunk into a molten cube of metal, which hardens around it. This reproduced shadow of an unseen shadow, in the vise of its now inert case, our writer will subsequently refer to by a term borrowed from the renegade surrealist Georges Bataille: *informe*, "unformed."

Our writer, who can only be Salvador Dali, goes on to imagine the story he will tell his now-rapt listener about the history of this particular object, whose burning tip alone can be seen. This history, of extreme complexity, will persuade the listener beyond a shadow of a doubt that, among other elements buried in the object, are "two authentic skulls—those of Richard Wagner and of Ludwig II of Bavaria. And," Dali adds, "it will be demonstrated that it is these two skulls, softened up by

a special process, that the cigarette is smoking." The glamour of rot and decay going up in smoke is, as we shall see, the very essence of the *informe*. Dali closes his text with the assertion, "The tip of this cigarette cannot but burn with a brilliance more lyrical in human eyes than the airy twinkle of the clearest and most distant star."<sup>2</sup>

Ten years earlier Man Ray had made the following image: a strange construction rises from the bottom edge of a photograph, pyramiding toward the top of its frame. The tip of the pyramid is a cigarette, its ash just kissing the edge of the sheet, its other end clenched in the teeth of a barely seen mouth at the apex of this construction's human base. For we are able to read as the support for the cigarette a face rotated 180 degrees, its humanness hardly recognizable from this position, the mass of falling hair that fills the bottom half of the frame a swirling, formless field.

With the dispassionate economy of only two moves—rotation and close-up—*Head, New York* (fig. 49) produces the image of the *informe*. Made just before the *Surrealist Manifesto* fired the starting shots of André Breton's revolution (but not before the movement's so-called "époque des sommeils"<sup>3</sup>), Man Ray's image could nonetheless have occupied the page in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* that carried Dali's text. This would hardly have been unusual for the photographer whose work was instantly to be wholly integrated into the full range of surrealist literary spaces. From 1924 Man Ray was treated as a kind of staff photographer for the movement's original journal, *La Révolution surréaliste*, contributing six images to its first issue. After

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Fig. 49. Man Ray, *Head, New York*, 1923. J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.

CORPUS DELICTI

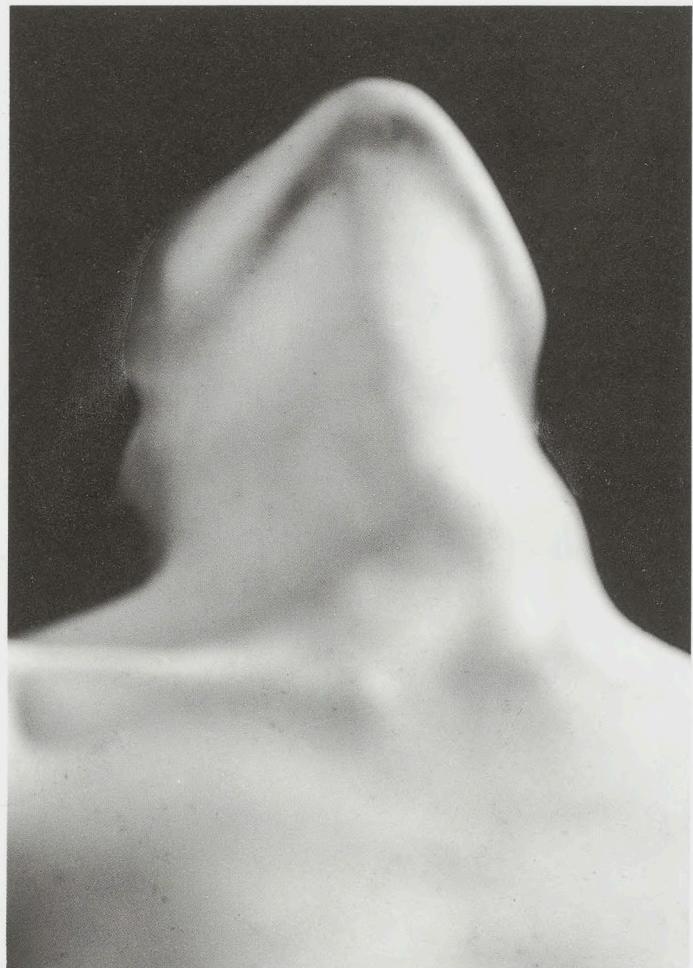


Fig. 50. Man Ray, *Anatomies*, c. 1930. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

turning over to his assistant, Jacques-André Boiffard, the illustration of Breton's *Nadja*, Man Ray went on to contribute images to Breton's *L'Amour fou*, to make photographs that would be chosen by Tristan Tzara to electrify his 1933 text "On a Certain Automatism of Taste," or to set up shots of phantoms to illustrate a 1934 Dali essay on "Aerodynamic Apparitions."

But *Head, New York* is not just an isolated case in Man Ray's work, a lucky coincidence that Dali could have found and used but, as chance would have it, did not. Its strategies are repeated within the scope of Man Ray's photographic output, defamiliarizing the human body, redrafting the map of what we would have thought the most familiar of terrains. *Anatomies* (fig. 50) is another such image, with similar unsettling effects. Once again human flesh pyramids to the top of the page, but here there is no inverted head with eyes and nose—reassuring, no matter how strangely sited. In *Anatomies* we stare at the underside of a violently up-ended chin, our eyes sliding along the muscularity of a distended neck rendered nonetheless weirdly gelatinous by the lighting and contour of the image, producing the apparition on this page of something puffy reptilian, like the belly and head of a frog. No eyes and nose, just this point where the head should be.

The surrealist photographers were masters of the *informe*, which could be produced, as Man Ray had seen, by a simple rotation and consequent disorientation of the body. This is how Boiffard performed it in his poignant nude for Bataille's magazine, *Documents* (fig. 54), or how one finds it in the extraordinary image by Brassai that was chosen to open the 1933 essay, "Varieties of the Human Body," in the premiere issue of *Minotaure* (fig. 48).<sup>4</sup> There the *Anatomies* strategy is chosen, the camera looking steeply up at the recumbent form to catch or to fabricate (or is it to imagine?) the nude body revealed as beast. For the lighting, which plunges the hips and thighs of the figure into shadowed obscurity, and the angle of vision, which forces the head out of sight behind the upper torso and shoulders, combine to image the face of an unknown animal: the protruberant breasts suggesting the horny tufts of the forehead; the luminous torso and upper arm doubling as face and ear.

In describing, as I have, this process of seeing *as if*—the breasts seen as if horns, the arm as if ear—I might seem merely to be saying that the photographers operating within the circuit of surrealism adopted just that predilection for metaphor of an extravagant and unexpectedly irrational kind that was so dear to the surrealist poets and so tirelessly described in the various tracts issued by the movement. Further, since the surrealists'

enthusiastic discovery of the fantastic bestiary of Lautréamont's 1869 prose poem, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, the exploration of the thought of man-as-animal had become a commonplace of surrealism. But that would be to ignore the precise conduct of this *as if*—its achievement through the syntax of the camera's hold on its object, its inversion of the body, its angling from below, its radical foreshortening and cropping, so that this particular experience of the human-as-if-beast occurs through a specifically spatial device: one that suggests the dizziness to which Dali refers; one that propels the image into the realm of the vertiginous; one that is a demonstration of falling. The body cannot be seen as human, because it has fallen into the condition of the animal.

There is a device, then, that produces this image, a device that the camera makes simple: turn the body or the lens; rotate the human figure into the figure of fall. The camera automates this process, makes it mechanical. A button is pushed, and the fall is the rest.

Yet it is here that one senses a tiny rupture beginning below the calm theoretical surface of surrealist practice. For the surrealist poetics of metaphor—beauty seen as the strange yoking of the umbrella and the sewing machine—is an *as if* specifically produced by chance. It comes automatically, descending on the passive, expectant poet, who waits for his dreams, his doodles, his fantasies to bring him the outlandish similes of his unconscious desires. The aleatory, the happenstance, the dictum of "object chance" had been laid down and repeated by André Breton. So that this photographic mechanization of the production of the image is indeed a break, if ever so small, with the poetics of the movement. And we might be prompted to ask: Is this little rift that we glimpse here not the tip of something larger, more fundamental, like that cigarette ash that had signaled the immense construction of the psychoanamorphic object, *informe* and inert, that lies beneath it?

Inside the domain of the photographic image, the rift in question enacts a struggle that went on outside, among the surrealists during the last half of the 1920s and into the early 1930s. This is a struggle that has been told only glancingly in the historical accounts of the movement, accounts that have almost universally been given from the point of view of surrealism's leader, the man who has been called its "arbiter" or its "magus."<sup>5</sup> Thus anything that André Breton banished from the center of the movement, symbolically called at the outset surrealism's "Centrale," was expelled into a darkness that became, in the eyes of history, a kind of oblivion. André Masson, once Breton's favorite painter, had been so

CORPUS DELICTI

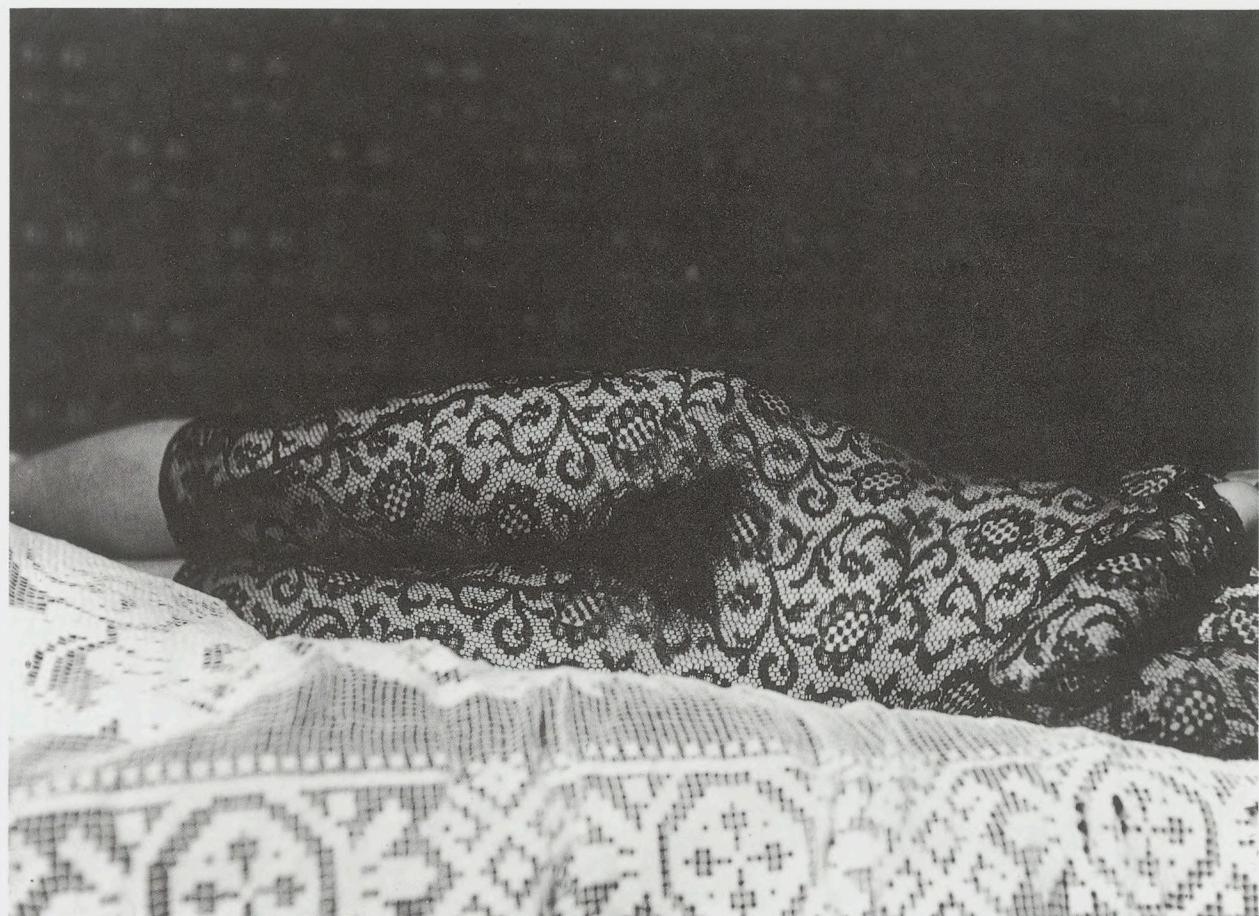


Fig. 51. Man Ray, *Untitled*, c. 1930. Jedermann Collection, N.A.

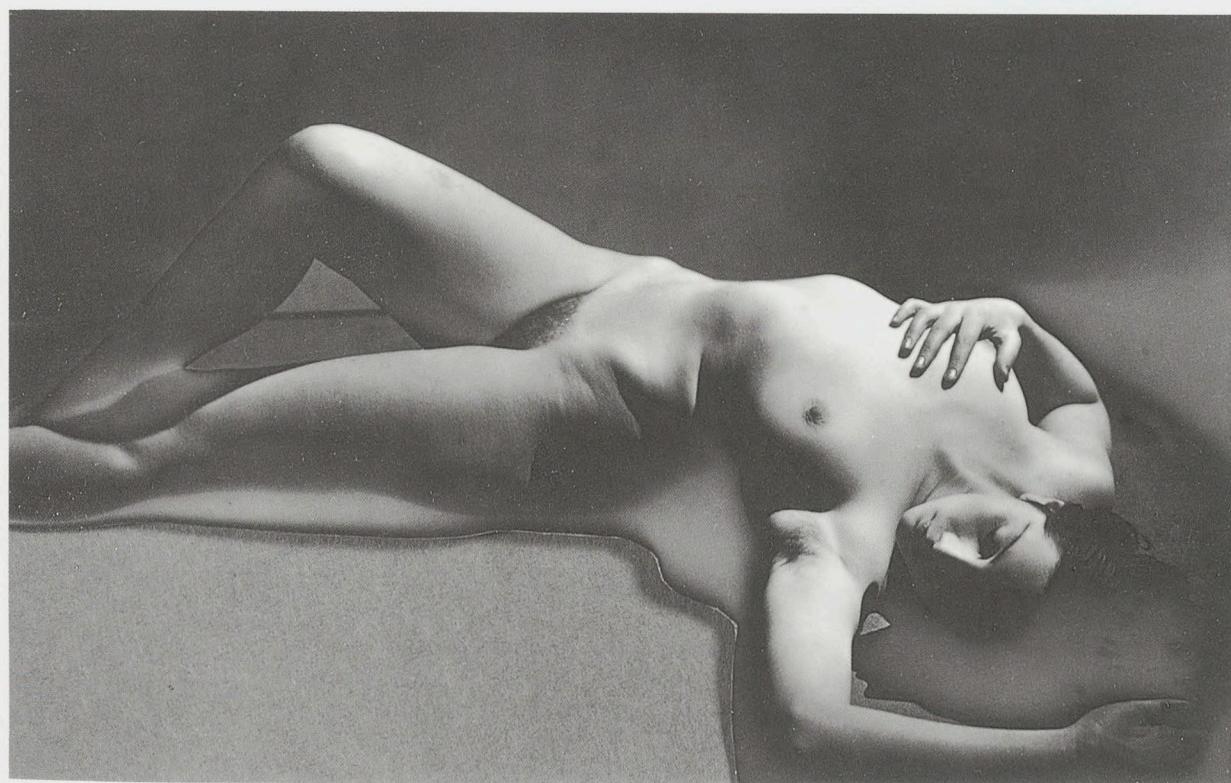


Fig. 52. Man Ray, *The Primacy of Matter Over Thought (Primat de la matière sur la pensée)*, 1929. Collection George Dalsheimer, Baltimore.

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Fig. 53. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untilted*, c. 1930. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

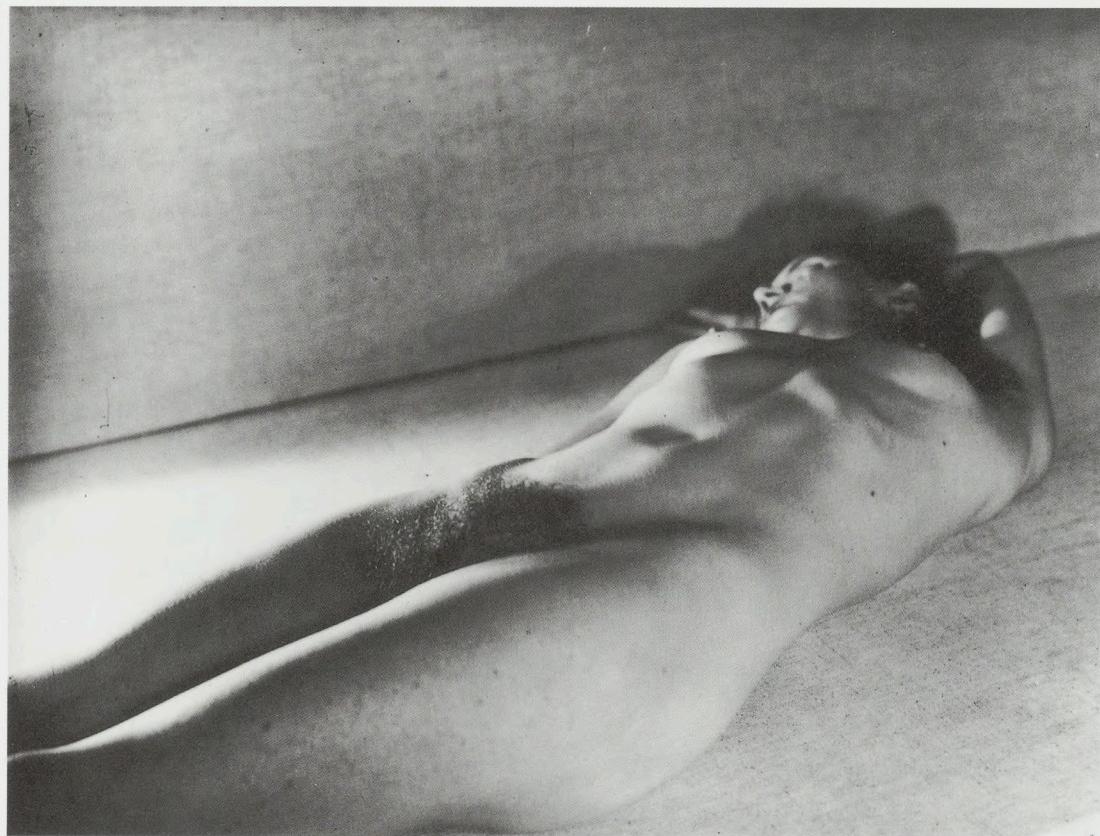


Fig. 54. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, c. 1930. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



Fig. 55. Raoul Ubac, *Ophelia (Ophelée)*, 1938. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.

dismissed, and Robert Desnos, the poet and master of autohallucination. But they were eventually recalled to the center, to function once more as the unquestioned players in the surrealist drama. Jacques-André Boiffard, once the secretary of the Centrale, had departed to this marginal position not to reappear in any history of the movement until the late 1970s.<sup>6</sup>

The excommunication of Masson and Desnos, which was proclaimed in the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*, merely articulated the break that these two figures, among many others, had already made with Breton, a break that had led to their defection to the camp of dissatisfied or "dissident surrealists," who for all that they were no longer playing on Breton's team still thought of themselves as in the same game. Gravitating toward Georges Bataille and his magazine, *Documents*, these renegades thereby associated themselves with the "enemy" leader—but one who did not contest the movement as such: Bataille was careful to characterize himself as surrealism's "old enemy from within." And it is to Bataille, not to Breton, that Dali owed the word *informe* with its particular anamorphic spin. Further, it was Bataille who developed the concept of *bassesse* to imply a mechanism for the achievement of *informe*, through an axial rotation from vertical to horizontal—that is, the mechanics of fall.

Breton undoubtedly feared the lure Bataille held for the young poets, painters, and photographers who had left the Centrale for this strange periphery. He thus prevented Dali from allowing the painting *Le Jeu lugubre* (1929) to be reproduced in *Documents* to accompany Bataille's analysis of it, forcing Bataille to resort to representing the painting by means of a diagram.<sup>7</sup> Short-lived, *Documents* ran only for the two years 1929 and 1930, but Bataille's impact on surrealist thinking—on the production of images that do not decorate, but rather structure the basic mechanisms of thought—resurfaced in 1933 in the very name for *Minotaure*, a magazine that operated as a surrealist vehicle. Bataille's title was also

his concept; as we shall see, this man/beast, blindly wandering the labyrinth into which he has fallen, dizzy, disoriented, having lost his seat of reason—his head—this creature is another avatar of the *informe*.<sup>8</sup>

If I am stressing the convergence of Bataille and Breton in the pages of *Minotaure*, this is because we are not used to reading surrealist production through the grid of Bataille's thought, and on these very grounds we might be tempted to disallow such images a status as "surreal."

But *Minotaure*'s imprimatur confers on them the movement's stamp, securing membership for Hans Bellmer's *Poupées*, for example, beyond any doubt that might be raised about the propriety of such an association for the man who illustrated in both graphic and photographic form (figs. 61, 94) Bataille's *L'Histoire de l'oeil* (1928; 1940), a book Breton excoriated as obscene.<sup>9</sup>

*Informe*, Bataille's term, has been pronounced by Dali and will possibly illuminate the procedures of a whole list of photographers, beginning with Man Ray, continuing to Boiffard and Brassai, and going on to Ubac, Bellmer, Tabard, Parry, and Dora Maar. What, then, was the precise role of this term for its author?

For Bataille, *informe* was the category that would allow all categories to be unthought. His entry for it in the serialized "Dictionary" that was published in *Documents* likened it to *crachat*, "spittle," noxious in its physical formlessness, providing thereby a simile that would figure forth the noxious, conceptual implications of *informe*; for this term was meant to allow one to think the removal of all those boundaries by which concepts organize reality, dividing it up into little packages of sense, limiting it by giving it what Bataille calls "mathematical frock coats," a phrase that points both to the abstractness of concepts and to the decorousness with which they are meant to constrain.<sup>10</sup> Allergic to the notion of definitions, then, Bataille does not give *informe* a meaning; rather, he posits for it a job: to undo formal catagories, to deny that each thing has its "proper" form, to imagine meaning as gone shapeless, as though it were a spider or an earthworm

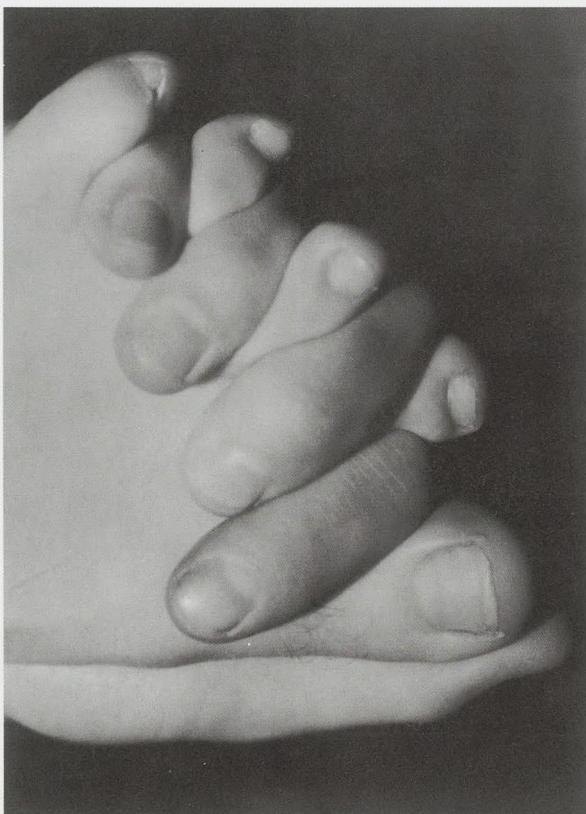


Fig. 56. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1929.  
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

crushed underfoot. This notion of *informe* does not propose a higher, more transcendent meaning through a dialectical movement of thought. The boundaries of terms are not imagined by Bataille as transcended, but merely as transgressed or broken, producing formlessness through deliquescence, putrifaction, decay.

Or can formlessness be produced as well by mechanical means, such as the turning of a camera or a body 180 degrees? Bataille's substitution of the idea of a dictionary as a giver of tasks rather than meanings heralds the active, aggressive tenor of his thought, separating it from that expectantly passive attitude of Breton's availability to chance. The idea that one could construct a machine to make something happen, a machine that would leave nothing to chance but the working out of detail, operates in Bataille's novel *L'Histoire de l'oeil*. To write its perversely spectacular story, as Roland Barthes has demonstrated, Bataille devises a combinatory mechanism for associating two strings of images, one generated by associations with the shape of the eye (eye/egg/testicles), the other by associations with the eye's status as a container of fluid (tears/yolk/semen).<sup>11</sup> In much the

same way, Dali's paranoid-critical method was also intended as a device. He described his strategy for simulating delirium as a machine for generating an active, aggressive assault on reality.<sup>12</sup> Another of these mechanisms or devices was the rotation of the very axis "proper" to man—his verticality, a station that defines him by separating his upright posture from that of the beasts—onto the opposing, horizontal axis. This operation, productive of *bassesse*, is most closely linked to the photographic practice we have been discussing. Two of the texts that explore this rotation into baseness, "The Big Toe" (1929) and "Mouth" (1930), were illustrated with photographs by Boiffard (figs. 143, 134).<sup>13</sup> In the essay "Mouth," where the issue of rotation is more explicit, Bataille contrasts the mouth/eye axis of the human face with the mouth/anus axis of the four-legged animal. The first, linked to man's verticality and his

possession of speech, defines the mouth in terms of man's expressive powers. The second, a function of the animal's horizontality, understands the mouth as the leading element in the system of catching, killing, and ingesting prey, for which the anus is the terminal point. But, beyond this simple polarity, to insist that at its greatest moments of pleasure or pain the human mouth's expression is not spiritual, but animal, is to reorganize the orientation of the human structure and conceptually

to rotate the axis of loftiness onto the axis of material existence. With this act of Bataille's, mouth and anus are conflated. Boiffard's photograph for this essay is a woman's open mouth, wet with saliva, its tongue an amorphous blur. A few years later, Raoul Ubac would in effect recreate this image when he pictured a woman's head and neck, with the head cropped just above the mouth, from which depends a long, organic, but at first indeterminate object that, upon close inspection reveals itself as a piece of liver. Ubac's poster-manifesto, *Post Your Poems/Post Your Pictures* (*Affichez vos poèmes/Affichez vos images*; fig. 170), was the occasion for this photograph.

Ubac's participation in the

creation of a photographic formlessness linked to the depiction of the human body was as persistent and as concentrated as Boiffard's or Man Ray's ever was. But, except for his *Sleeping Nude* (*Nu couché*; fig. 47), axial rotation was not the device to which he resorted. Instead, he often explored the technical infrastructure of the photographic process, submitting the image of the body to assaults of a chemical and optical kind. *Women/Cloud* (*La Nébuleuse*; fig. 62) was achieved by "brûlage," attacking the emulsion of the negative image of a standing woman with the heat of a small burner. The resultant melting, which ripples and contorts the field of the photo, is often related in the scholarly and critical literature to automatism: the creation of suggestive imagery through the operations of chance.<sup>14</sup> But the title of this work supposes the disintegration rather than the creation of form, and the procedure whose trace suggests the

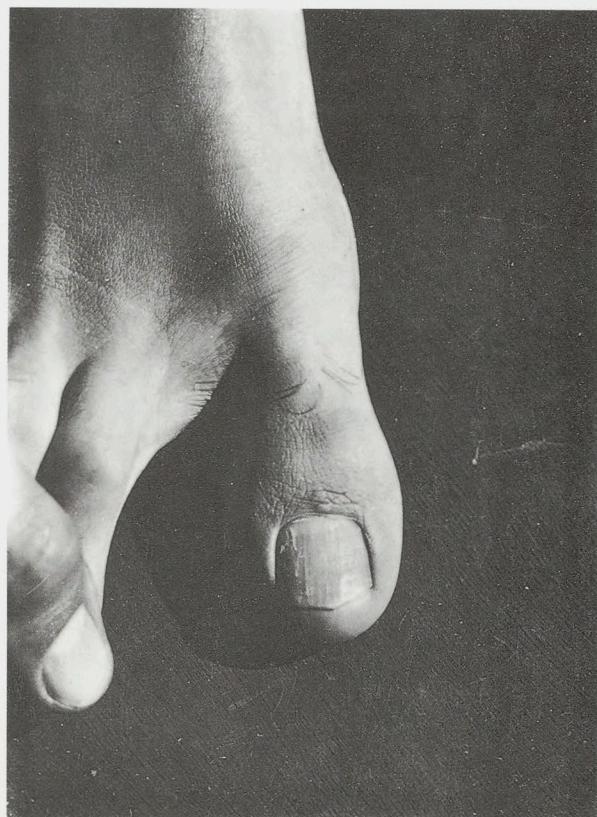


Fig. 57. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1929.  
Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

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Fig. 58. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1929. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

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Fig. 59. Roger Parry, *Untitled*, 1931. Collection John Waddell, New York.



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Fig. 60. André Kertész, *Distortion #102*, 1933. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

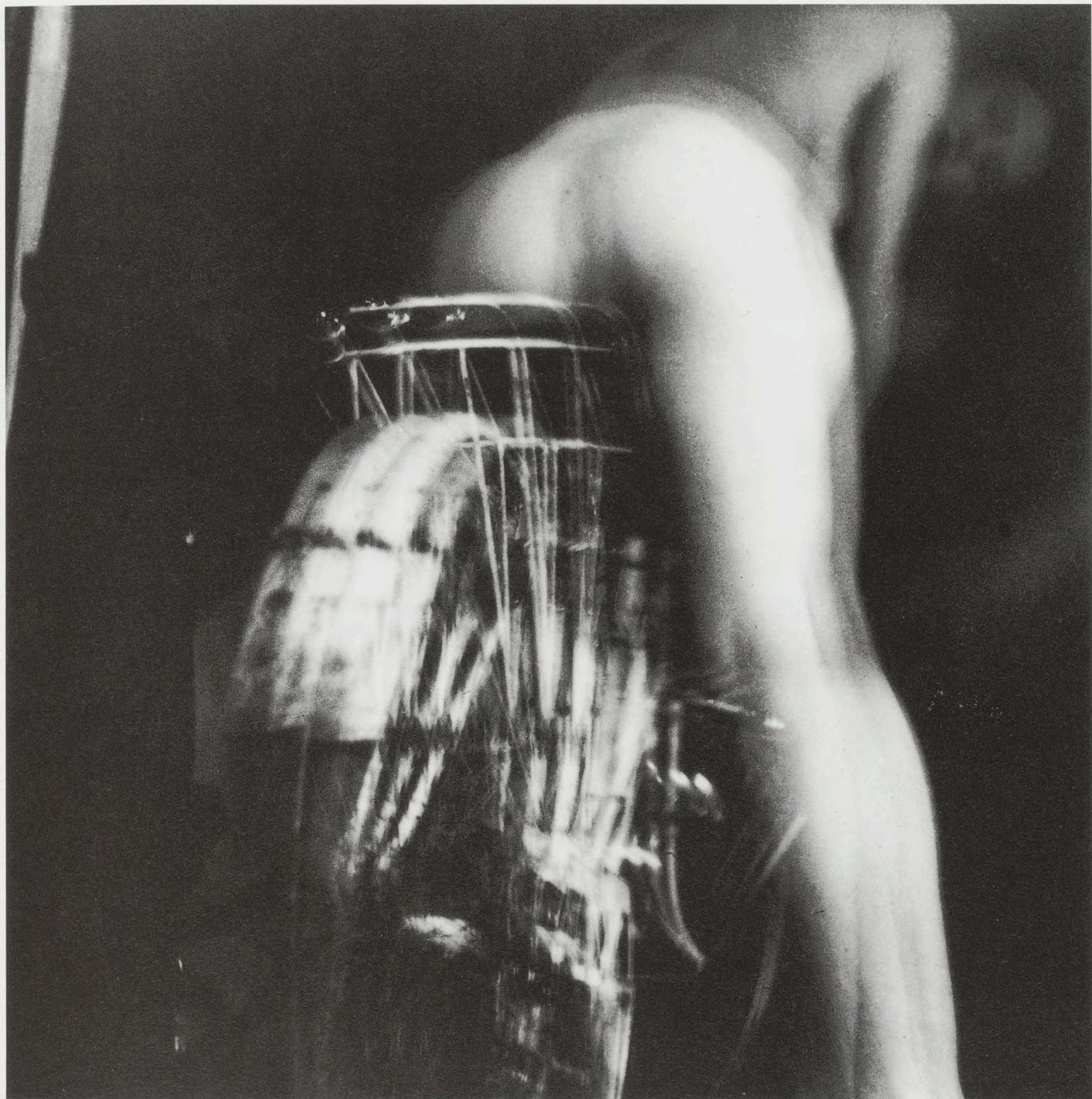


Fig. 61. Hans Bellmer, *Untitled*, 1946. Collection François Petit, Paris.

workings of fire is a device for producing this formlessness.

Ubac's optical assaults on the body took place over a long series of ambitious, complex photomontages that he worked out in the late 1930s. Under the generic title *Battle of the Amazons* (*Le Combat des Penthesilées*; figs. 63, 64, 65, 66), these images are the result of successive attacks of solarization. In a first stage a montage would be produced, grouping together various shots of the same nude. This image would then be rephotographed and solarized, the resultant positive becoming a new element to be recombined, through montage, with other fragments and then to be rephotographed and resolarized. Solarization, which bares the light-sensitive paper of an eventual positive print to a moment's re-exposure during the printing process, opens the darkest areas of the positive image—usually those very shadows that define the edges of solid objects—to what will later read as a kind of optical corrosion. A mode of producing a simultaneous positive/negative, solarization most frequently reads as the optical reorganization of the contours of objects. Reversing and exaggerating the light/dark relationships at this precise registration of the envelope of form, solarization is a process that can obviously be put to the service of the *informe*. In the most extreme example of this work, Ubac pushes his procedure toward the representation of a violent deliquescence of matter, as light operates on the boundaries of a body that in turn gives way to this depicted invasion of space.

Indeed, one of the ways we can generalize the whole of what we have been seeing so far is that a variety of photographic methods has been exploited to produce an image of the invasion of space: of bodies dizzily yielding to the force of gravity; of bodies in the grip of a distorting perspective; of bodies decapitated by the projection of shadow; of bodies eaten away either by heat or light. Following the usual formulas for explaining the surrealist image, we might say that this consumption of matter by a kind of spatial ether is a representation of the overturning of reality by those psychic states so courted by the poets and painters of the movement: reverie, ecstasy, dream. But while some of these images would support this reading—Dali's *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy* (fig. 17), Man Ray's work for *Facile* (fig. 86), or his ironically titled *The Primacy of Matter over Thought* (*Le Primat de la matière sur la pensée*; fig. 52), for example, or Ubac's *Ophelia* (*Ophélie*; fig. 55)—others clearly do not. They do not seem to depict bodies seized from within and transformed, but, rather, bodies assaulted from without. So that we are tempted to say that if there is a

psychological condition onto which these images open, it may not be found in the usual catalogue of surrealist experiences.

*Prends garde: à jouer au fantôme, on le devient.*

—Roger Caillois

Roger Caillois opens the article "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," his curious contribution to a 1935 issue of *Minotaure*, with the caution quoted above, a warning that the fate of playing at chimeras may be that of becoming one.<sup>15</sup>

During the first years of *Minotaure*, Caillois, sociologist and avant-garde writer, published two long essays, the first on the praying mantis, the second on the biological phenomenon of mimicry. These early forays into a kind of sociobiology of consciousness were written out of the belief that insects and human beings partake of "the same nature," thus eradicating the boundaries that are thought to establish a distinct or properly *human nature*.<sup>16</sup>

Because of the ubiquity of the praying mantis image in both poetic and pictorial surrealism, Caillois's discussion of the grip of this insect on human imagination has entered the literature on the thematics of the movement.<sup>17</sup> The female mantis's sexual practices—in certain species its consumption of its mate after or even during copulation—and its voracity made it the perfect symbol of the phallic mother, fascinating, petrifying, castrating. In this guise the mantis swarms over surrealist work of the 1930s: in the paintings of Masson and Dali, in the sculptures of Giacometti, in the collages of Max Ernst. In another guise it also appears in one of Hans Bellmer's rare sculptures, *Machine Gunneress in a State of Grace* (1937), which depicts the insect in a condition of androidlike automation, an aspect of the mantis also described by Caillois. In fact, Caillois concluded that it is in this opening onto the imaginative possibility of the robot, the automaton, the nonsentient, mechanical imitation of life, that the mantis's link to the phantasm of human sexuality is to be found. It is just this aspect that connects his discussion of the mantis with his subsequent exploration of mimicry; for the mantis comes most stunningly to resemble a machine when, even decapitated, it can continue to function and thus to mime life. "Which is to say," Caillois writes, "that in the absence of all centers of representation and of voluntary action, it can walk, regain its balance, have coitus, lay eggs, build a cocoon, and, what is most astonishing, in the face of



Fig. 62. Raoul Ubac, *Woman/Cloud (La Nébuleuse)*, 1939.  
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

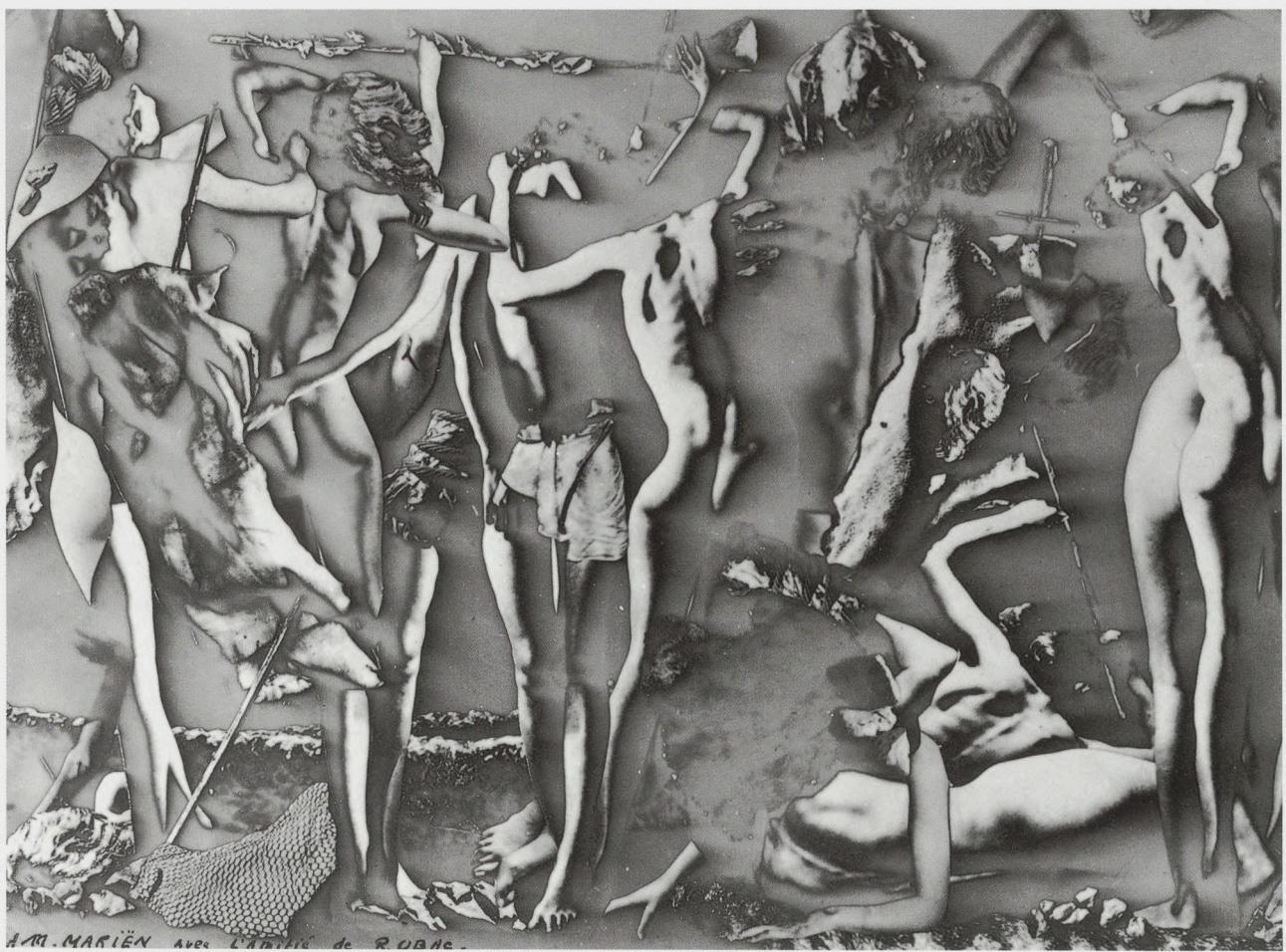


Fig. 63. Raoul Ubac, *The Battle of the Amazons (Le Combat des Penthesilées)*, 1939. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.

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Fig. 64. Raoul Ubac, *Group II*, 1939. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.



Fig. 65. Raoul Ubac, *Group I*, 1939. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.



Fig. 66. Raoul Ubac, *Group III*, 1939. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.

danger can fall into a fake, cadaverous immobility. I am expressing in this indirect manner what language can scarcely picture, or reason assimilate, namely, that dead, the mantis can simulate death."<sup>18</sup>

Caillois's essay on mimicry had extraordinary resonance within the psychoanalytic circles developing in Paris in the 1930s. Jacques Lacan, for example, continued to express his debt to this text, particularly in his working out of the concept of the "mirror stage"—the child's first encounter with its image in a mirror, which results in a fictional self-projection that influences subsequent identity formation—a principle he first presented publically in 1936, though he did not publish it until 1949.<sup>19</sup> With this connection and its explicit attention to the operations of doubling, of the replication of a conscious subject by his pictured duplicate, we might already realize that in some kind of general way this issue of mimicry opens onto surrealist photography's persistent exploration of the double as a structural principle: simultaneously formal and thematic. But in relation to the images we have been discussing, with their depiction of a curious invasion of the body by space, Caillois's treatment of mimicry has a rather more specific pertinence.

Most of the scientific explanations for animal mimicry relate it to adaptive behavior. It is argued that the insect takes on the coloration, the shape, the patterning of its environment in order to fool either its predator or its prey. But the adaptation hypothesis founders on two counts, Caillois shows. First, the fusion of the insect with its environment can and often does work against survival, as when the animal is mistakenly eaten by its own kind or cannot be perceived by members of its species for purposes of mating. Second, this phenomenon, which functions exclusively in the realm of the visual, is largely irrelevant to animal hunting—a matter of smell and motion. The specific visuality of mimicry can be shown, Caillois attests, to be more than just the projection that human observers, with their quite different systems of perception, make upon this field of natural pattern. Mimicry seems to be a function of the visual experience of the insect itself, as when, for example, camouflage behavior in certain species is suspended either at night or when the ocular antennas are cut.

Tying mimicry to the animal's own perception of space, Caillois then hypothesizes that this phenomenon is in fact a kind of insectoid psychosis—the psychaesthesia of his title referring to Pierre Janet's psychiatric notion of a catastrophic drop in the level of psychic energy, a loss of ego substance, or what one writer has called a kind of "subjective detumescence."<sup>20</sup> The life of any organism depends on the possibility of its maintaining

its own distinctness, a boundary within which it is contained, the terms of what we could call its self-possession. Mimicry, Caillois argues, is the loss of this possession, because the animal that merges with its setting becomes dispossessed, derealized, as though yielding to a temptation exercised on it by the vast outsideness of space itself, a temptation to fusion. Lest it seem too bizarre to apply psychological concepts to this occurrence, Caillois reminds his readers of the terms of primitive sympathetic magic, in which an illness is conceived of as a possession of the patient by some external force, one that dispossesses the victim of his own person, one that can be combated by drawing it off from the patient through the mimicry performed by a shaman in a rite of repossession.

There is an obvious connection between this text, appearing in the review that bore as its title one of Bataille's favorite figures, and the concerns that we have been tracing under the condition *informe*. For what could be more formless than this spasm of nature, in which boundaries are indeed broken and distinctions truly blurred? Likening the responses of schizophrenic subjects to the phenomenon of animal mimicry, Caillois writes, "Space seems for these dispossessed souls to be a devouring force . . . it ends by replacing them. The body then desolidifies with his thoughts, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space. . . . He is alike, not like something but simply *like*. And he invents spaces of which he is 'the convulsive possession.'"<sup>21</sup>

And indeed it is this aspect of reality that is explored by Ubac's photograph of the surrealist mannequin constructed by Masson, in which the caged head of the female, her prey in her mouth, evokes the mantis (fig. 68). For in Ubac's terms, this mantis, which possesses, is simultaneously possessed by the mesh of space, an effect that is to be found as well in Boiffard's image of a woman/spider (fig. 69). If the effect of mimicry is the inscription of space on the body of an organism, then this is, of course, the theme of one of the very first photographs ever to be published by the movement: Man Ray's *The Return to Reason* (*Retour à la raison*; fig. 67), in the first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, where the nude torso of a woman is shown as if submitting to possession by space. It is an image to which Man Ray was to return several times throughout the 1920s, most lyrically in a triptych of Lee Miller before a window (figs. 126–128).

Now this inscription of the body by space, this operation

CORPUS DELICTI

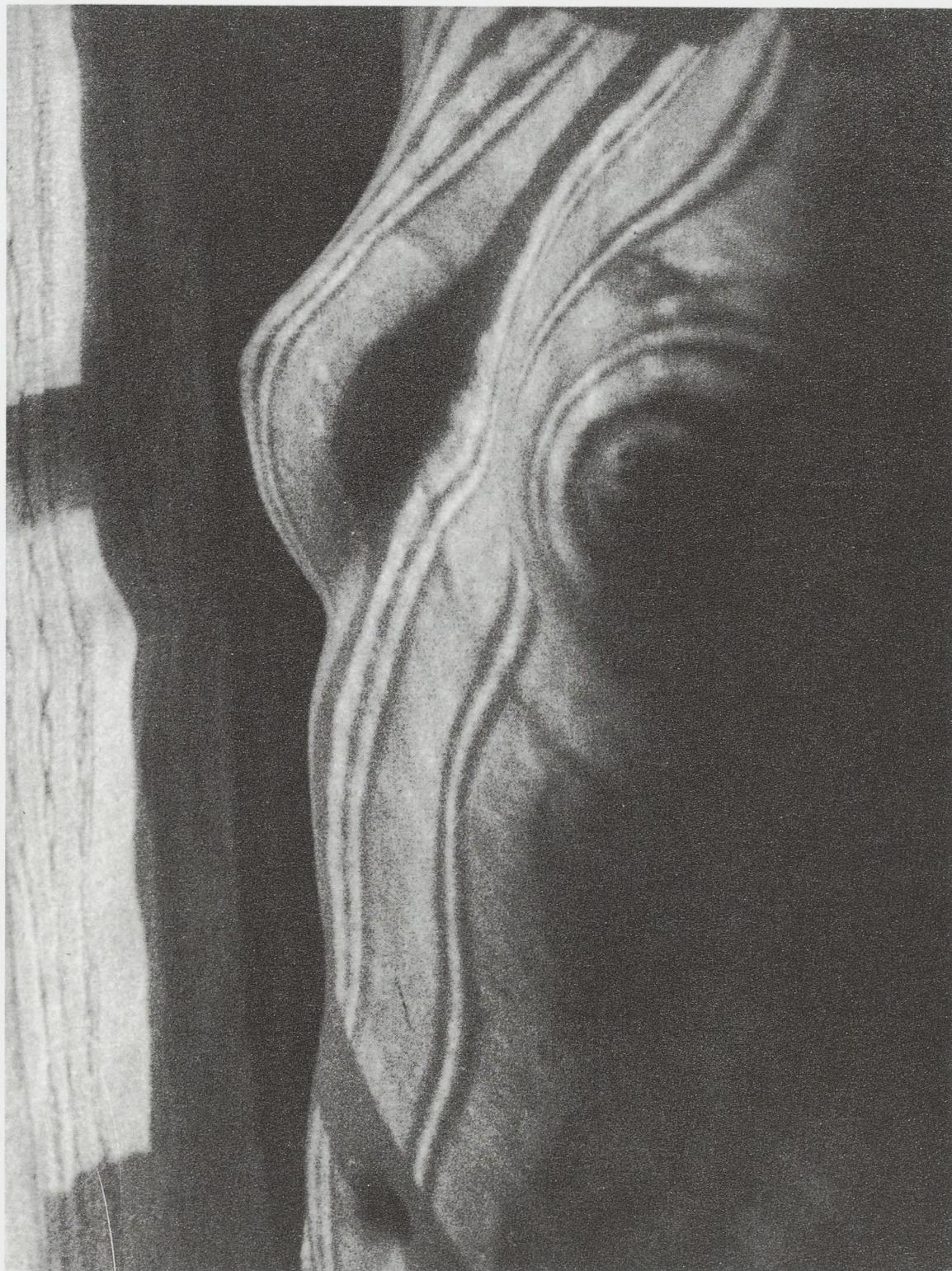


Fig. 67. Man Ray, *Return to Reason* (*Retour à la raison*), 1923. Art Institute of Chicago, Julien Levy Collection.

L'AMOUR FOU

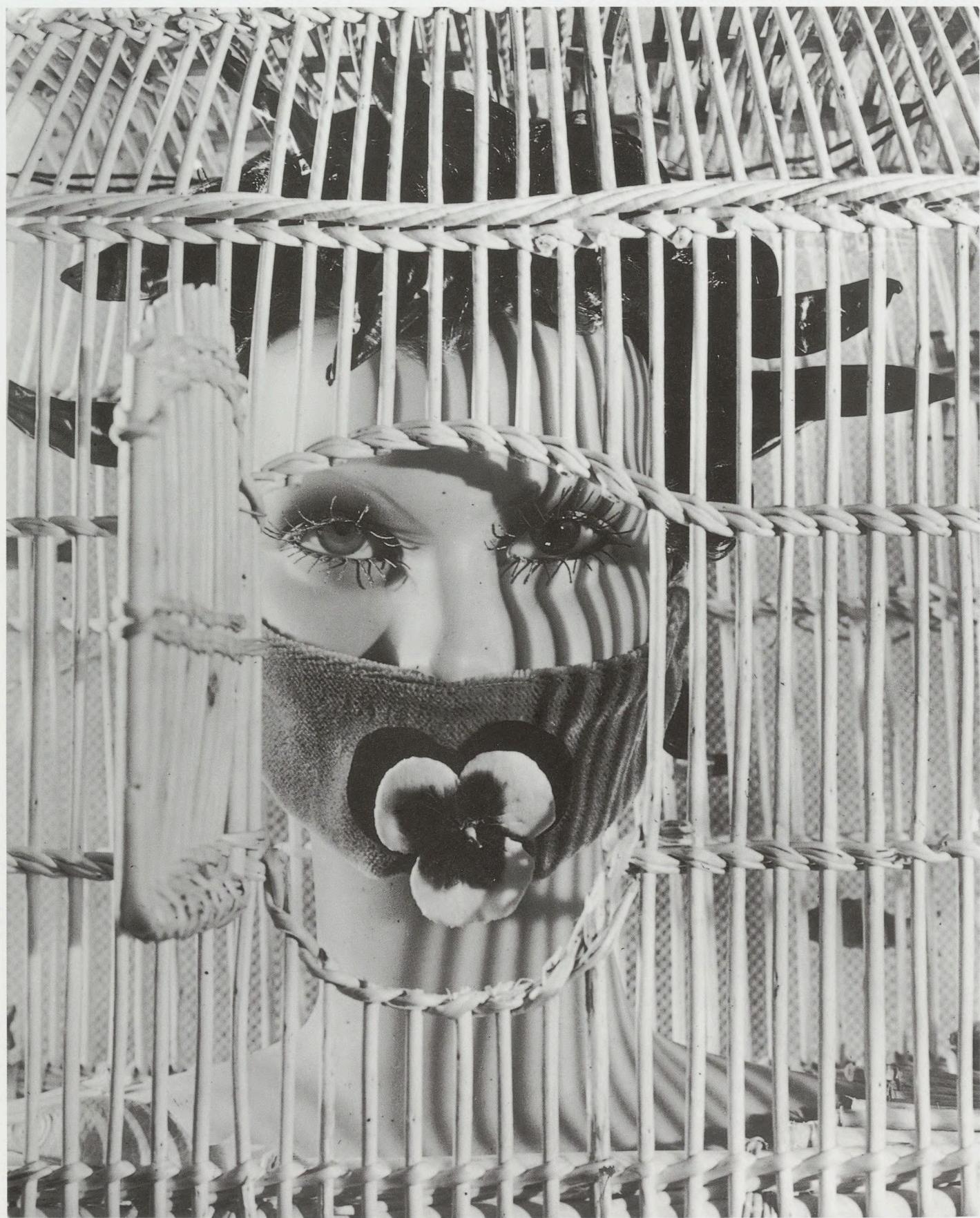


Fig. 68. Raoul Ubac, *Mannequin*, 1937. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.

CORPUS DELICTI

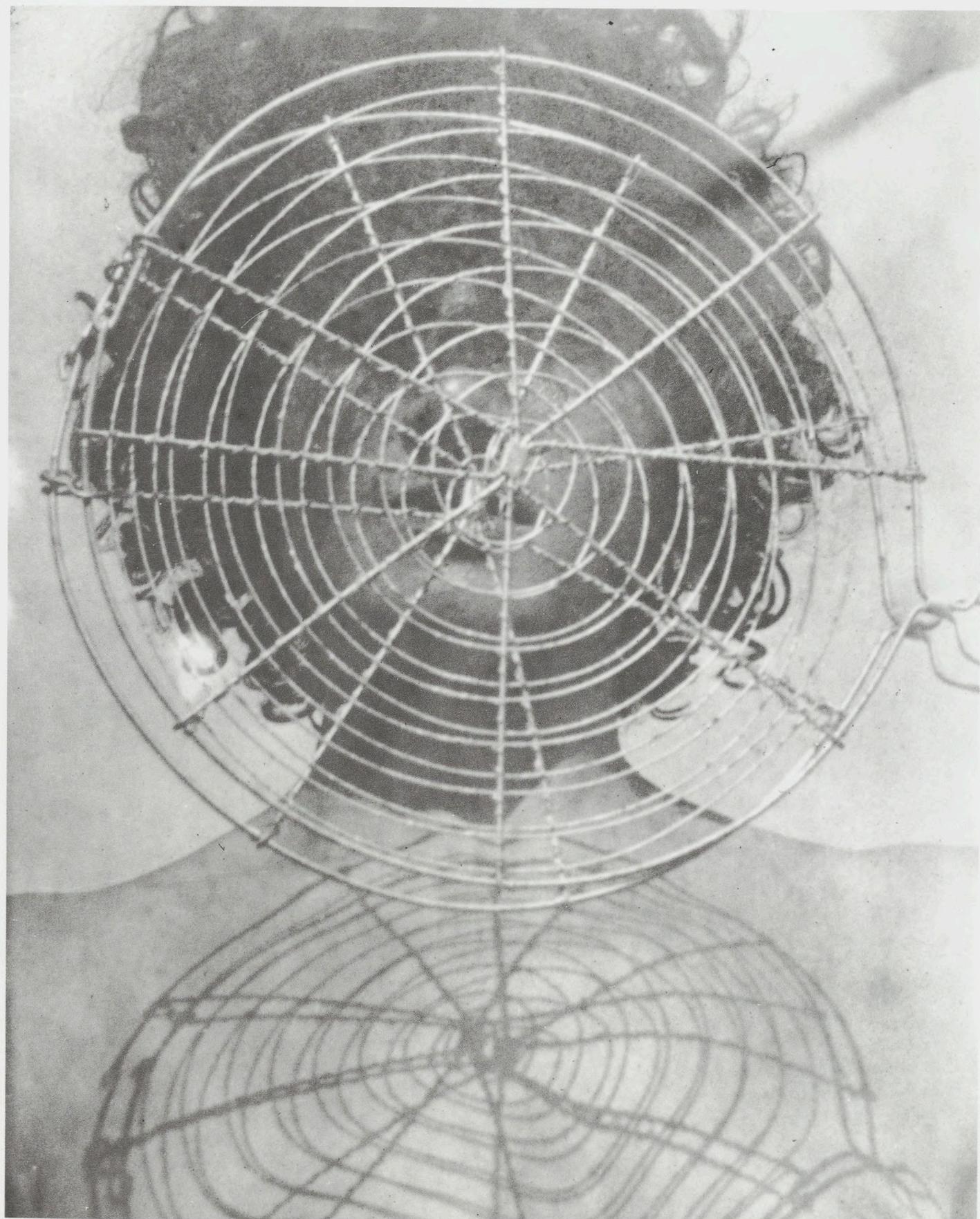


Fig. 69. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, c. 1930. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

through which the seeing subject is defined as a projection, a being-seen, corresponds to that very moment in Caillois's argument in which he examines the subjectivity of vision. For Caillois moves to a rather different level in his analysis when he defines the nature of this breakdown in the organism's relation to space as a structural problem in the field of representation. Caillois describes it using the model of the dihedron, a geometric figure constructed, like a T, of two intersecting planes:

Space is inextricably both perceived and represented. From this point of view it is a double-dihedron, changing at each moment in size and situation: a *dihedron of action*, the horizontal plane of which is formed by the ground and the vertical plane by the man himself who walks and who, because of this, carries the dihedral relation along with him; and a *dihedron of representation* determined by the same horizontal plane as before (but represented and not perceived), intersected vertically at the distance where an object appears. It is with represented space that the drama becomes clear: for the living being, the organism, is no longer the origin of the coordinates, but is one point among others; it is dispossessed of its privilege and, in the strongest sense of the term, *no longer knows where to put itself*.<sup>22</sup>

There is a diagram in a rather later seminar of Jacques Lacan that depicts this double-dihedral effect, although with a different set of figures.<sup>23</sup> Using two opposing triangles, Lacan first constructs the usual visual pyramid of perspective projection—with the viewer's eye stationed at the apex and the thing he sees deployed along the field that makes up the triangle's base—a pyramid that locates the viewer at Caillois's "origin of the coordinates" and therefore represents the perceptual half of the double-dihedron. It is in terms of the second triangle that Lacan plots Caillois's dihedron of representation. For, in this figure, the occupant of the apex of the triangle is not a sentient being but a point of light—irradiant, emanating from space at large—and the base plane of the triangle is now labeled "picture." It is along this plane that the perceiving organism occurs, although no longer as the privileged point from which reality is constructed, but as Caillois's "one point among others," a figure in a picture for which it is not viewer but viewed. Significantly, this relationship, in which the subject occurs only as alienated from himself—for he is defined or inscribed as a *being-seen* without, however, being able to see either his viewer or his own figure in the viewer's picture—is the one that Lacan constructs as the domain of the essentially visual. For here, where the field of the "picture" separates from the geometric,

ultimately tactile conception of perspectival space, Lacan finds the terms of an irresolvable and perpetual tension, and it was here that he was able to diagram the "scopic drive," to elaborate, that is, the dynamics of a specifically visual dimension within which the subject is dispossessed.

The peculiar conception of the visual that Caillois depicted and Lacan went on to develop most immediately in his theory of the mirror stage both coincides with the primacy that modernist art gave to pure visuality and conflicts with the utopian conclusions that the theorists of modernism drew from this idea of optical power. For the notions of Caillois and Lacan did not support the modernist idea of sensuous mastery, with each sense liberated into the purity of its own experience; the visuality Caillois and Lacan described was a mastery from without, imposed on a subject who is trapped in a cat's cradle of representation, caught in a hall of mirrors, lost in a labyrinth.

Nothing is more available to photography than this labyrinthine doubling, this play of reflection. Characterized as being itself a mirror (Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., had dubbed the new invention a "mirror with a memory"), the camera nonetheless enacts Caillois's double dihedron: there is a fundamental schism between the subject that perceives and the image that looks back at him, because that image, in which he is captured, is seen from the vantage of another.

The photograph that Ubac took to accompany an article titled "Mirrors," which *Minotaure* published in 1938 as a kind of popularization of Lacan's theories of the mirror stage, is a stunning demonstration of the disarticulation of the self by means of its mirrored double (fig. 70). In brilliant sunlight a woman's face is seen in a mirror whose state of decay returns her image to her strangely altered, transformed. Her eyes, her forehead, part of her hair, obscured as though by shadow, are in fact corroded and dispersed through the very agency of reflection. So that this subject who sees is a subject who, in being simultaneously "seen," is entered as "picture" onto the mirror's surface. In this very moment of inscription, as in a doubling reminiscent of Caillois's theory of mimicry, one discovers an image of the *informe*, the crumbling of boundaries, the invasion of space.

It is here, in relation to a concern with the subject's mirroring, that one locates Maurice Tabard's participation in the concerns of the movement during that brief period, 1929 to 1931, in which he used photomontage to explore the essential double-sidedness of the photographic support (figs. 71, 72, 73). For what is unique to photography, shared by no other image-making process, is the transparency of the photographic negative, the



Fig. 70. Raoul Ubac, *Portrait in a Mirror* (*Portrait dans un miroir*), 1938. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 71. Maurice Tabard, *Untitled*, 1929. Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

CORPUS DELICTI

Fig. 72. Maurice Tabard, *Untitled*, 1929.  
Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.



Fig. 73. Maurice Tabard, *Untitled*, 1929.  
Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

information on which, though reversed left and right, is fully intelligible from both front and back.<sup>24</sup> In this fundamental condition of reversal Tabard located the fusion of the image with its flipped, mirrored double.

Continually recombining and repeating an extremely limited vocabulary of elements, Tabard chose two types of objects with which he created two independent series. The first, composed of elements like ladders, cane-backed chairs, or tennis-rackets, entered the image to function as representations of the negative itself. Objects that are themselves double-sided and gridlike, they became in Tabard's hands the figures of the infrastructure of the photographic screen in its ideal condition of reversibility.

It was against this first series that Tabard then introduced the human figure through a doubling that would call attention to the body's own reversibility, the two-sidedness of its profiles, the paired doubleness of hands and arms and breasts. But, unlike a grid, the human body is not identical from one side to the other. Though symmetrical, it is, like reality itself, imbedded in the question of aspect, of bodies perceived in space. The identity between the right and left hand is always mediated by the fact of mirror reversal.

In the most brilliant of Tabard's photomontages these two factors are simultaneously made visible: reversibility and mirror reversal, constantly working together to reinfect the naive notion of the mirror-with-a-memory. For Tabard's mirror is double-dihedral; here one discovers a picture of the subject wedged onto the paper-thin plane of reversibility, simultaneously a front and a back, a subject that looks out from the point at which it exists, and a subject that is dispossessed within its very being by the fact of being seen.

Tabard's transformation of the subject is, in this sense, the result of a simple manipulation: the flipping of the negative. This process is both as structurally tied to the procedures of photography as the other strategies we have seen—rotation and solarization—and, for all that Tabard's images are layered and complex, as fundamentally efficient. No more than Ubac's *brûlages*, or his optical meltings, Tabard's images are not a matter of automatism, of an openness to chance. The premeditation evident in Tabard's choice of elements, the linking of the double series to form a combinatory mechanism, the use of a single operator to produce his transformations—all of this is reminiscent of the operations we have been reading through the grid of those linked concepts that at this moment combine to redefine the visual: Bataille's *informe*, Caillois's mimicry, Lacan's "picture."

In most of this work Tabard builds the *idea* of the mirror into the image through a kind of structural

operation, but in the montage that is perhaps his most famous—the photograph chosen by *Foto-Auge*—the issue takes another form.<sup>25</sup> For in *Hand and Woman (Main et femme)*; fig. 74) a looking-glass is explicitly present, a handmirror held by the woman in such a way that it both obliterates her face and seems to call into being the shadowy, threatening, faceless male presence behind her—as though it were his image, on the other side of hers as its obverse, that the mirror reflected. This location of the mirror in the register of dread irresistibly calls to mind another text within the psychoanalytic corpus dear to the surrealists. In its linking of the experience of the double to a sense of menace, the work seems to open onto the terrain of Freud's 1919 essay, "The Uncanny," particularly that moment where he ties the uncanniness triggered by the idea of the *Doppelgänger* to the primitive fear of mirrors. Referring to Otto Rank's study of this phenomenon, Freud writes:

He has gone into the connections the "double" has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death; but he also lets in a flood of light on the astonishing evolution of this idea. For the "double" was originally an insurance against destruction to the ego, an "energetic denial of the power of death," as Rank says; and probably the "immortal" soul was the first "double" of the body. This invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of the genital symbol. . . . Such ideas, however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which holds sway in the mind of the child as in that of primitive man; and when this stage has been left behind the double takes on a different aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death.<sup>26</sup>

This double, this first narcissist projection, is thus thought primitively through the agency of all doubles: shadows cast by the body as well as the body's mirrored reflections. The shadow is the earliest form through which the soul is imagined. Projecting the persistence of the bodiless self after death in the form of a "Shade," the shadow is also for many cultures the form in which the souls of the dead return to haunt or take possession of the living. Indeed, in Tabard's image of threatened possession, the facelessness of the male figure, the blackness of his disguise—made all the more emphatic in contrast to the woman's white shift—projects him through the condition of the Shade. But in the Ubac *Portrait in a Mirror (Portrait dans un miroir)*; fig. 70),



Fig. 74. Maurice Tabard, *Hand and Woman (Main et femme)*, 1929. Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

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Fig. 75. Man Ray, *Explosante-fixe*, 1934. Private Collection, Paris.

too, the possibility of reading the obliterating condition of the mirror as an effect of shadow brings the full thrust of the "uncanny" into this image—although it must be added that superstitious belief projects the polished surfaces of mirrors as the medium for the return of the dead as well.<sup>27</sup> The extraordinary woman who stares at us from the depths of Ubac's mirror, the lower half of her face youthful and lovely, the upper portion distorted and sightless, could be an image of that famous character who pushes André Breton to rewrite the question, "Who am I?" in the form, "Whom do I haunt?"<sup>28</sup>

Together, it would seem, both *Nadja* and *L'Amour fou* perform a strange kind of gloss on the "The Uncanny." For in these accounts, which developed during the decade 1928–37, Breton's notion of objective chance is generated from the web of accident and circumstance of which Nadja seems to have foreknowledge and to which Breton feels himself eventually to gain admittance through the agency of desire. Breton's insistence on the patterns of significance that underlie and control the operations of chance takes on a strange resonance when read against Freud's analysis of coincidence. The uncanniness that seems to surround certain repetitions of names, or numbers, or concatenations of objects within one's everyday life "forces upon us," Freud acknowledges, "the idea of something fateful and unescapable where otherwise we should have spoken of 'chance' only." The temptation to ascribe a secret meaning to what seems like the obstinate recurrence of a number, for example, leads people frequently to read into these repetitions the language of fate.<sup>29</sup>

In Freud's argument this ascription of meaning to happenstance and this assumption of powers of clairvoyance (off-handedly referred to by his patients as their "'presentiments' which 'usually' come true") can be understood as the reassertion within adult life of more psychologically primitive states, namely those related to the "omnipotence of thoughts" and to belief in animism.<sup>30</sup> All those bonds that children and tribal man create between themselves and everything around them in order to gain mastery over an all-too-threatening and inchoate environment are first given visual form by the image of the self projected onto the external world in the form of one's shadow or one's reflection. Then, through mechanisms of projection, these doubles—invented to master and sustain the individual—become the possessors of supernatural power and turn against him.

The experience of "convulsive beauty," of something that shakes the subject's self-possession, bringing exultation through a kind of shock—an "*explosante-fixe*" (fig. 75)—the experience of the manifestations of Breton's

objective chance cannot but be illuminated by Freud's "uncanny," where shock, mixed with the sudden appearance of fate, engulfs the subject:

Our analysis of instances of the uncanny has led us back to the old, animistic conception of the universe, which was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of human beings, and by the narcissistic overestimation of subjective mental processes (such as the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts, the magical practices based upon this belief, the carefully proportioned distribution of magical powers or "manna" among various outside persons and things), as well as by all those other figments of the imagination with which man, in the unrestricted narcissism of that stage of development, strove to withstand the inexorable laws of reality. It would seem as though each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to that animistic stage in primitive men, that none of us has traversed it without preserving certain traces of it which can be re-activated, and that everything which now strikes us as "uncanny" fulfills the condition of stirring those vestiges of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression.<sup>31</sup>

The collapse of the distinction between imagination and reality—an effect devoutly wished by surrealism, but one that Freud analyzes as the primitive belief in magic—animism, and narcissistic omnipotence are all potential triggers of that metaphysical shudder that is the uncanny. For they represent the breakthrough into consciousness of earlier states of being, and in this breakthrough, itself the evidence of a compulsion to repeat, the subject is stabbed, wounded by the experience of death.

*As Spectator I wanted to explore photography not as a question (a theme) but as a wound.*

—Roland Barthes<sup>32</sup>

The fear of a wound to the eye and the revelation that the beautiful girl Olympia is in fact a doll/automaton combine in E. T. A. Hoffmann's early nineteenth-century story "The Sandman," as Freud's first example of the uncanny. The frequent sense of the eeriness of waxwork figures, artificial dolls, and automata can be laid to the way these objects trigger "doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate." This confusion between the animate and the inanimate is an

instance of that class of the uncanny that we have already followed, involving a regression to animistic thinking and its confusion of boundaries. To the effect produced by dolls, one could add, Freud acknowledges, the uncanny effect of epileptic seizures and the manifestations of insanity, "because these excite in the spectator the feeling that automatic, mechanical processes are at work, concealed beneath the ordinary appearance of animation."<sup>33</sup>

But Freud's reading of "The Sandman" and its extreme effect of uncanniness turns not simply on the doll's ambiguous presence, but on her dismemberment within the story, a dismemberment through which she is deprived of her eyes. In this she becomes a figure for the second class of the uncanny, which arises from the surfacing of another order of infantile experience: that of the complexes, specifically here the the fear of castration.

Hans Bellmer recounts that in 1932 he saw Jacques Offenbach's opera *The Tales of Hoffmann*—the first act of which focuses on the Olympia story derived from "The Sandman"—and it was this that triggered his first *Doll*.<sup>34</sup> This entire series, an endless acting-out of the process of construction and dismemberment—or perhaps the more exact characterization would be construction as dismemberment—could not be more effectively glossed than by Freud's analysis of "The Sandman." For the *Dolls*—the first series of which were constructed in 1933 and published in *Minotaure* in 1934, while the second series, *The Games of the Doll* (*Les Jeux de Poupée*), was finished by 1936 but not published until 1949—stage endless *tableaux-vivants* of the figure of castration. Yet there is another section from "The Uncanny" that is important for reading Bellmer's *Dolls*: in the passage already cited with regard to the double, we find an analysis of the double's place in dreams. The invention of the protective strategy of doubling, Freud writes, finds its way into the language of dreams to operate there on the subject of castration by representing it through the multiplication or doubling of "the genital symbol."

In Bellmer's manipulation of this cycle, everything is concerted to produce the experience of the imaginary space of dream, of fanstasy, of projection. Not only does the obsessional reinvention of an always-same creature—continually recontrived, compulsively repositioned within the hideously banal space of kitchen, stairwell, parlor—give one the narrative experience of fantasy, with its endless elaboration of the same, but the quality of the image, with its hand-tinted, weirdly "technicolor" glow, and the sense that, though it is in focus, one can never quite see it clearly, combine to create both the aura and

the frustration that are part of the visuality of the imaginary.

Within this dream space the doll herself is phallic. Sometimes, deprived of arms, but endowed with a kind of limitless pneumatic potential to swell and bulge with smaller protruberances, she seems the very figure of tumescence (fig. 77). At other times she is composed of fragmented members of the doll's body, often doubled pairs of legs stuck end-to-end, to produce the image of rigidity: the erectile doll (fig. 80). But in this very pairing that is also a multiplication, a pairing of the pair, one meets the dreamer's strategy of doubling (figs. 78, 79). As he tries to protect the threatened phallus from danger by elaborating more and more instances of its symbolic proxy, the dreamer produces—although transformed—the very image of what he fears. This is what Freud would later identify as the "Medusa effect," where the decapitated, castrated head is surrounded by snakes, which, "however frightening they may be in themselves, they nevertheless serve actually as a mitigation of the horror, for they replace the penis, the absence of which is the cause of the horror. This is a confirmation of the technical rule according to which a multiplication of penis symbols signifies castration."<sup>35</sup>

To produce the image of what one fears in order to protect oneself from what one fears is the strategic achievement of anxiety, which arms the subject in advance against the onslaught of trauma, the blow that takes one by surprise. This analysis, through which *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* recasts the propositions of "The Uncanny" in terms of the life and death of the organism, speaks of the trauma as a blow that penetrates the protective armor of consciousness, piercing its outer shield, wounding it by this effect of stabbing.

Bellmer's connection of the doll, the wound, the double, and the photograph in a series in which each one stands in symbolic relation to the other develops a logic that prefigures, in each of its parameters, the analysis that Roland Barthes was to make four decades later in *Camera Lucida*. For this work, too, is an elaboration of the uncanny—of the photographic effects of the uncanny—announced with the very first words of his text: "One day, quite some time ago, I happened on a photograph of Napoleon's youngest brother, Jerome, taken in 1852. And I realized then, with an amazement I have not been able to lessen since: 'I am looking at eyes that looked at the Emperor.'"<sup>36</sup>

The story that Barthes recounts in his book starts with this moment of shock, which, he tells us, he could not share with others, for they seemed to understand neither



Fig. 76. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1934. Jedermann Collection, N.A.



Fig. 77. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupee)*, 1938.  
Private collection, Paris.

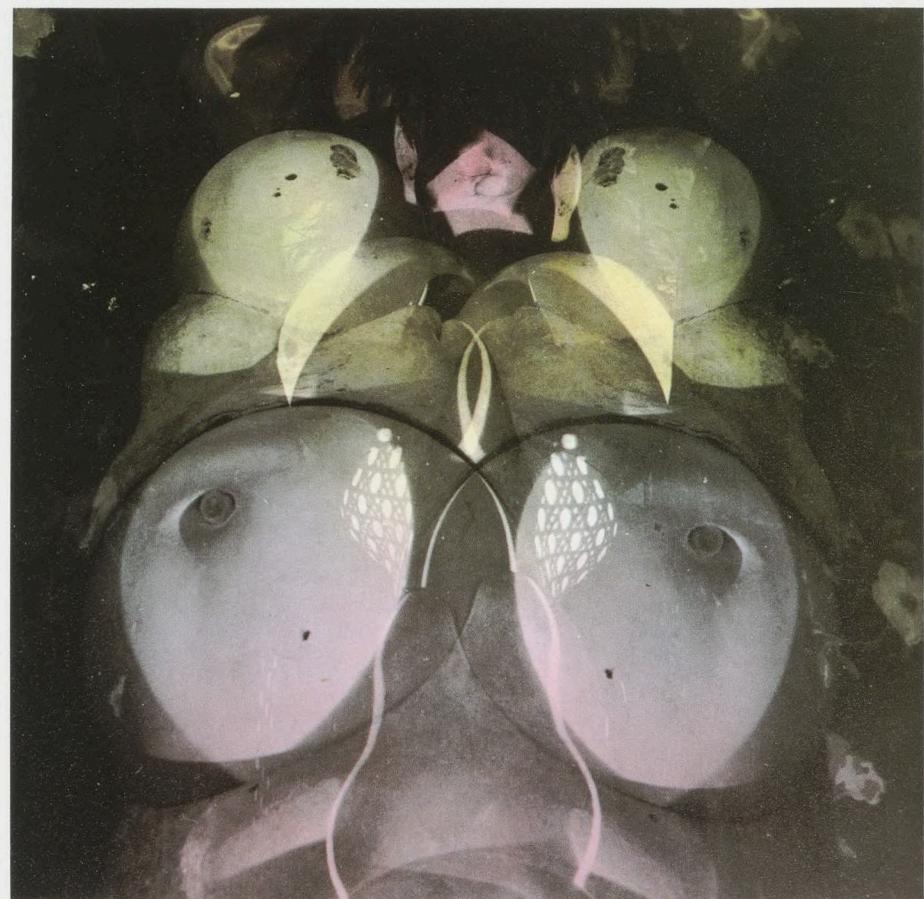


Fig. 78. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupee)*, 1938.  
Private collection, Paris.

CORPUS DELICTI

Fig. 79. Hans Bellmer, *Idol (L'Idole)*, 1937.  
Private collection, Paris.

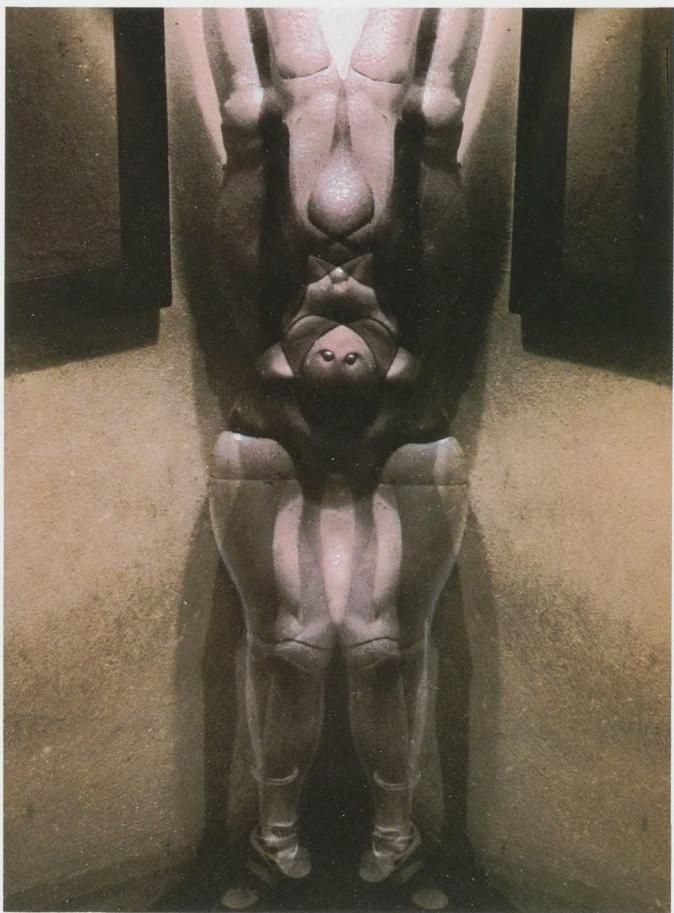


Fig. 80. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1936/1949.  
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 81. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1936/1949.  
Private collection, New York.



Fig. 82. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1938.  
Private collection, Paris.

its nature nor its power on him. Alone with this sensation of unease, he eventually forgot about it. After that, he says, "My interest in photography took a more cultural turn." Which meant he began to think photography analytically, by constructing a difference between the general, human interest that photographs elicit—the "*studium*"—and the kind of detail they may or may not contain, which punctures that generality, rupturing or lacerating it, and thus pricking or bruising the spectator—the "*punctum*." Over half the course of his book is devoted to an attempt to articulate the nature of this *punctum*, this photographic detail that arrests his attention, that pricks it.

Barthes's scholarly narrative is then broken by a rather different construction of the *punctum*, one which connects it to the kind of sudden fright that punctures the organism's defenses, or to the shudder of fatefulness that is the uncanny. For the *punctum* now is used for the experience of seeing a ghost. Barthes begins to tell about looking through an album of photographs after the death of his mother and, miraculously, finding her essential image in a photograph of her as a child. Once more there is the shock that was delivered by the image of Jerome Bonaparte, only now more radical and wounding as he confronts the *being* of his mother as a *being-past* established by the very medium that recorded her as a being-who-was-going-to-die. And Barthes realizes that the scandalous effect of photography is the certainty of the "that-has-been" that attaches itself to the image, a certainty that the *punctum*—"the real *punctum* of the photograph [that] is Time"—decodes as the image of mortality itself: "By giving me that absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. I shudder, like Winnicott's psychotic patient, over a catastrophe which has already occurred. Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe."<sup>37</sup>

*The appeal to our emotions . . . is largely due to the quality of authenticity in the photograph. The spectator accepts its authority and, in viewing it, perforce believes he would have seen that scene or object exactly so if he had been there.*<sup>38</sup>

—Edward Weston

The revelation that *Camera Lucida* recounts centers on the one photograph the book does not reproduce because, as Barthes says of this image, "It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture. . . .

at most it would interest your *studium*: period, clothes, photogeny; but in it, for you, no wound."<sup>39</sup> The science of photography that Barthes finds here is, then, "the impossible science of the unique being," the paradox of "the truth—for me." The grip of photography's vaunted objectivity is loosened here, and photography's "authenticity" is redefined.

But for the whole of this century's photographic aesthetics, the nature of the photographic image is such, as Edward Weston admonishes, "that it cannot survive corrective handwork."<sup>40</sup> Which is one way of saying that the supposed authority of the photograph is in its truth value, in the objectivity of its *objectif* (or lens), in the "straightness" with which it views the world. The code of Straight Photography discourages to the greatest degree any tampering with the image. Barthes's subjectivism, in which the photograph exists as a construct—fabricated "for me"—is a scandal for the aesthetics of Straight Photography, as is all photographic activity that resorts to construction: to darkroom manipulation, to the manipulation of scissors and paste, to any contrivance that would seem to construct "the real." How can it be real, if it is fabricated?

This is the same scandal that surrealist photography has long since delivered and continues to deliver to the congregation of Straight Photography. For surrealist photography is contrived to the highest degree, and that even when it is not involved in actual superimpositions, or solarizations, or double exposures, or what have you. Contrivance, we could say, is what ensures that a photograph will seem surrealist: why Man Ray's *Anatomies* (fig. 50) is so, for example, in the absence of any darkroom manipulation. Surrealist photography does not admit of the natural, as opposed to the cultural or made, and so all of what it looks at is seen as if already, and always, constructed through a strange transposition of this thing into a different register. We see the object by means of an act of displacement, defined through a gesture of substitution. The object, "straight" or manipulated, is always manipulated and thus always appears as a fetish. It is this fetishization of reality that is the scandal.

A direct enunciation of this principle occurs in both Tristan Tzara's 1933 essay in *Minotaure*, "On a Certain Automatism of Taste," and Man Ray's photographs used to illustrate it (fig. 26).<sup>41</sup> Analyzing fashion as the unconscious construction of a changing set of signs for the erogenous zones of the body, Tzara's text goes on to define fashion as a system for rewriting the sexual organs in the register of a peculiar displacement of sexual identity—the fashions of 1933 having decreed that women



Fig. 83. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupee)*, 1936/1949. Private collection, Paris.



Fig. 84. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1938. Private collection, Paris.



Fig. 85. Brassaï, *Untitled*, 1933. Collection Rosabianca Skira, Geneva.

wear hats that create representations of female genitalia in the form of masculine garb, namely, the split-crown fedora (and that effect is heightened even further, Tzara points out, by the addition of ornament in the form of such male attire as bow ties, garters, and so on). In the images he created for this essay Man Ray puts this precise construction in place. One of his photographs, for example, produces the image of collapsed sexual identity as the hat's rounded expression of the head beneath it articulates both male and female organs at once. Only one other image in the surrealist photographic canon puts this collapse of sexual difference before us quite so directly: Brassai's untitled nude (fig. 85), in which the female body and the male organ have each become the sign for the other.

If fetishism is the substitute of the unnatural for the natural, its logic turns on the refusal to accept sexual difference. "To put it plainly: the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (mother's) phallus which the little boy once believed in and does not wish to forego—we know why." The fetish as substitute is not only a denial of sexual difference, but it often bears the mark of its very founding at a sudden moment of arrest that occurs within the visual realm. "When the fetish comes to life," Freud writes, "some process has been suddenly interrupted . . . what is possibly the last impression received before the uncanny traumatic one is preserved as a fetish . . . the last moment in which the woman could still be regarded as phallic." This blow that stops time and decrees that on the site of its arrest there be built the sexually indeterminant substitute of the fetish, this blow occurs in the realm of the visual, which now becomes the theater for endless rehearsals of a fabricated vision. The first example of the fetish Freud gives in this essay—a patient's eroticization of a "shine on the nose"—in its chain of substitutions that are further complicated through a displacement of language (as the English "glance at the nose" was transposed into German as *Glanz* [or shine] *auf der Nase*), demonstrates the visual component of this institution: a moment of sight that fabricates the real.<sup>42</sup>

Surrealism can be said to have explored the possibility of a sexuality that is not grounded in an idea of human nature, or the natural, but instead, woven of fantasy and representation, is fabricated. One hears this most distinctly during a collective mapping of the terrain of the sexual act, which Breton conducted with a dozen of his fellow surrealists at the rue Fontaine in 1928. It comes when Aragon imperiously interrupts Breton's strictures on the unnaturalness of this or that practice with, "I

wish to signal that for the first time in the course of this discussion the word 'pathological' has been put in play. That seems to imply on the part of some of us an idea of normalcy. I wish to take a stand against this idea."<sup>43</sup>

Surrealism's having taken the love act and its object—woman—as its central, obsessional subject, it must be seen that in much of surrealist practice, woman, in being a "shine on the nose," is nowhere in nature. Having dissolved the natural in which "normalcy" can be grounded, surrealism was at least potentially open to the dissolving of distinctions that Bataille insisted was the job of the *informe*. Gender, at the heart of the surrealist project, was one of these categories. If within surrealist poetry *woman* was constantly in construction, then at certain moments that project could at least prefigure a next step, in which a reading is opened onto deconstruction. It is for this reason that the frequent characterizations of surrealism as antifeminist seem to me to be mistaken.<sup>44</sup>

Within surrealist photographic practice, too, *woman* was in construction, for she is the obsessional subject there as well. And since the vehicle through which she is figured is itself manifestly constructed, *woman* and *photograph* become figures for each other's condition: ambivalent, blurred, indistinct, and lacking in, to use Edward Weston's word, "authority."

The nature of the authority claimed by Weston and Straight Photography is grounded in the sharply focused image, its resolution a figure of the unity of what the spectator sees, a wholeness that in turn founds the spectator himself as a unified subject. That subject, armed with a vision that plunges deep into reality (and through the agency of the photograph is given the illusion of mastery over it), seems to find unbearable a photography that effaces categories and in their place erects the fetish, the *informe*, the uncanny.

There are, of course, other projects to rethink photography. And thus to return to *Camera Lucida*, we should note the ending that Barthes gives to this mythic tale of the Science of Photography. The night that he found the photograph of his mother, Barthes tells us, he saw a movie in which there was an automaton, whose dancing with the hero stirred in Barthes pangs of love that he linked to the madness he associated with his newly organized feelings about photography: "a new form of hallucination . . . a mad image, chafed by reality." The automaton, the double of life who is death, is a figure for the wound that every photograph has the power to deliver; for each one is also a double and a death: "All those young photographers who are at work in the world, determined upon the capture of actuality, do not know

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Fig. 86. Man Ray, *Untitled* (for *Facile*), 1935. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

CORPUS DELICTI



Fig. 87. Man Ray, *Untitled* (for *Facile*), 1935. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



Fig. 88. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1931. Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex, England.

that they are agents of Death. . . . Contemporary with the withdrawal of rites, photography may correspond to the intrusion, in our modern society, of an asymbolic Death, outside of religion, outside of ritual, a kind of abrupt dive into literal Death. Life/Death: the paradigm is reduced to a simple click, the one separating the initial pose from the final print.”<sup>45</sup>

That simple click is what Breton had called the *explosante-fixe*, and that combination of madness and love, released by the doll and by the essence of photography, which Barthes describes as a “gone mad” and an instance of “*la vérité folle*,” is—in its uncanniness; its convulsiveness—a kind of *amour fou*.

1. “Le fumeur met la dernière main à son travail / Il cherche l’unité de lui-même avec le paysage,” from “Le Soleil en laisse,” *Claire de Terre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

2. Salvador Dali “Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques,” *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, no. 5 (May 1933), pp. 45–48.

3. The “époque des sommeils” is often used to refer to the years 1922 and 1923 as the group around André Breton began to experiment with automatic writing, the recording of dreams, and hypnotically induced trances.

4. Maurice Raynal, “Variétés du corps humain,” *Minotaure*, no. 1 (1933), p. 41.

5. Two of the standard works on Breton are so subtitled: Anna Balakian, *André Breton: Magus of Surrealism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) and Clifford Browder, *André Breton, Arbiter of Surrealism* (Geneva: Droz, 1967).

6. The first number of *La Révolution surréaliste* announced the opening of Le Bureau Central de Recherches Surréalistes, giving its address as 15, rue de Grenelle. The cover photomontage for this number pictures the surrealists assembled there. Masson and Desnos were among many others publicly expelled in the “Second Manifeste du Surréalisme,” *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 12 (December 1929), pp. 1–17; translated in André Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969). For the first placement of Boiffard, see Dawn Ades, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), pp. 228ff.

7. Georges Bataille, “Le Jeu lugubre,” *Documents* 1, no. 7 (December 1929): 297–302. The incident is discussed in Ades, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

8. For a discussion of Bataille, the Minotaur, and the figure of the labyrinth, see Denis Hollier, *La Prise de la Concorde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), pp. 109–133. See also Rosalind Krauss, “Alberto Giacometti,” “Primitivism” in 20th Century Art (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), pp. 523–24.

9. Hans Bellmer, “Poupée. Variations sur le montage d’une mineure articulée,” *Minotaure*, no. 6 (1935), pp. 30–31. Bataille’s *L’Histoire de l’oeil* was published in 1928 under the pseudonym Lord Auch. Bellmer provided etchings for a subsequent publication in 1940. The photographs that can be identified as relating to specific scenes from Bataille’s novel (Simone’s first seduction of the narrator as she sits in a plate of milk, Simone riding naked on a bicycle, etc.) have been dated from the mid 1940s. See *Hans Bellmer, Photographe* (Paris: Filipacchi, 1983), p. 148, cat. no. 129.

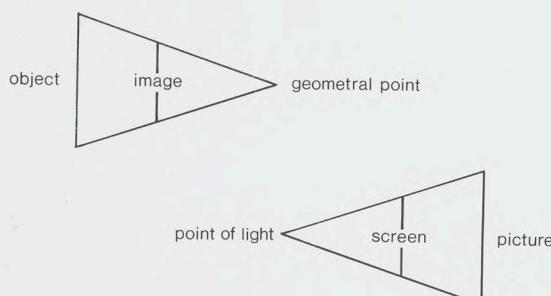
10. Georges Bataille, “Informe,” *Documents* 1, no. 7 (December 1929): 382.

11. Roland Barthes, “La métaphore de l’oeil,” *Critique*, no. 195–96 (1963), p. 772.

12. The prologue to Dali’s “Interprétation Paranoïaque-critique de l’Image obsédante ‘L’Angélus’ de Millet” (*Minotaure*, no. 1 [1933]) is titled, “New General Considerations on the Mechanism of the Paranoid Phenomenon from the Surrealist Point of View.” The image from the Dali/Buñuel film *Un Chien andalou* (1928) of a razor slicing through the open eye of a woman enacts this sense of aggression. Bellmer also devises a “machine” for assaulting the familiar terrain of the body: “Onto the photograph of a nude, set an unframed mirror at a perpendicular angle, and constantly maintaining the 90-degree angle, progressively rotate it, such that the symmetrical halves of the visible ensemble diminish or enlarge according to a slow and regular evolution. . . . Whether, through this entrance of the mirror and its movement, it is a question of the whipcord that spins the top or the expressive reflex of the organism, we grasp the same law: opposition is necessary for things to exist and for a third reality to come into being” (Hans Bellmer, “Notes sur la jointure à boule,” *Hans Bellmer* [Paris: Cnacarchives, Centre Nationale d’Art Contemporain, 1971], p. 27).

13. Georges Bataille, “Le Gros Orteil,” *Documents* 1, no. 6 (November 1929): 297–302; and Bataille, “Bouche,” *Documents* 2, no. 5 (1930): 299.

14. This is how it is characterized, for example, by Nancy Hall-Duncan, *Photographic Surrealism* (Cleveland: The New Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1979), p. 8. Eduard Jaguer does not, however, link *brûlage* to techniques of the immediate past so much as he sees in it an avatar of the *informel* pictorial preoccupations of the 1940s. See Eduard Jaguer, *Les Mystères de la chambre noire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982), p. 118.
15. Roger Caillois, "Mimétisme et Psychasthénie Légendaire," *Minotaure*, no. 7 (1935), p. 5.
16. Roger Caillois, "La Mante réligieuse," *Minotaure*, no. 5 (1934), pp. 23–26.
17. See William Pressly, "The Praying Mantis in Surrealist Art," *Art Bulletin* 55 (December 1973): 600–615.
18. Caillois, "La Mante réligieuse," p. 26.
19. Jacques Lacan, "Le Stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je," *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 93–100; in English as "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I," *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1982), pp. 1–7. Lacan cites Caillois's importance (p. 96 in the French edition and p. 3 in the English).
20. Denis Hollier, "Mimesis and Castration, 1937," *October*, no. 31 (Winter 1984), p. 11.
21. Caillois, "Mimétisme," pp. 8–9.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
23. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981), p. 91.
25. Franz Roh, *Foto-Auge* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1929), no. 44.
26. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–73), vol. 17, pp. 234–35. Hereafter, this edition will be referred to as "Standard Edition," followed by volume and page number. See also Otto Rank, *The Double*, trans. Harry Tucker, Jr. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971).
27. Rank, *op. cit.*, pp. 62–63.
28. *Nadja* opens, "Who am I? If this once I were to rely on a proverb, then perhaps everything would amount to knowing whom I 'haunt.'" André Breton, *Nadja*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1960).
29. Freud, "The Uncanny," *Standard Edition*, vol. 17, p. 237.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 240–41.
32. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 21.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
34. Bellmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 2–3.
35. Sigmund Freud, "The Medusa's Head," *Standard Edition*, vol. 18, p. 273.
36. Barthes, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
38. Edward Weston, "Techniques of Photographic Art," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1941), as cited in Hollis Frampton, "Impromptus on Edward Weston: Everything in Its Place," *October*, no. 5 (Summer 1978), p. 64.
39. Barthes, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
40. Frampton, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
41. Tristan Tzara, "D'un Certain Automatisme du gout," *Minotaure*, nos. 3–4 (1933), pp. 81–85.
42. Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," *Standard Edition*, vol. 21, pp. 152–53.
43. "Recherches sur la sexualité," *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 11 (March 1928), p. 37.
44. This is maintained, for example, in Xavière Gauthier, *Surréalisme et sexualité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).
45. Barthes, *op. cit.*, p. 92.



24. It could be argued that stained glass is yet another reversible medium. Yet the same information is not intelligible from the back of the glass as that applied to its front.

CORPUS DELICTI



Fig. 89. Hans Bellmer, *Untitled*, 1946.  
Private collection, Paris.



Fig. 90. Hans Bellmer, *Untitled*, 1946.  
Private collection, Paris.



Fig. 91. André Kertész, *Distortion #16*, 1933. Pace-MacGill Gallery, New York.

CORPUS DELICTI

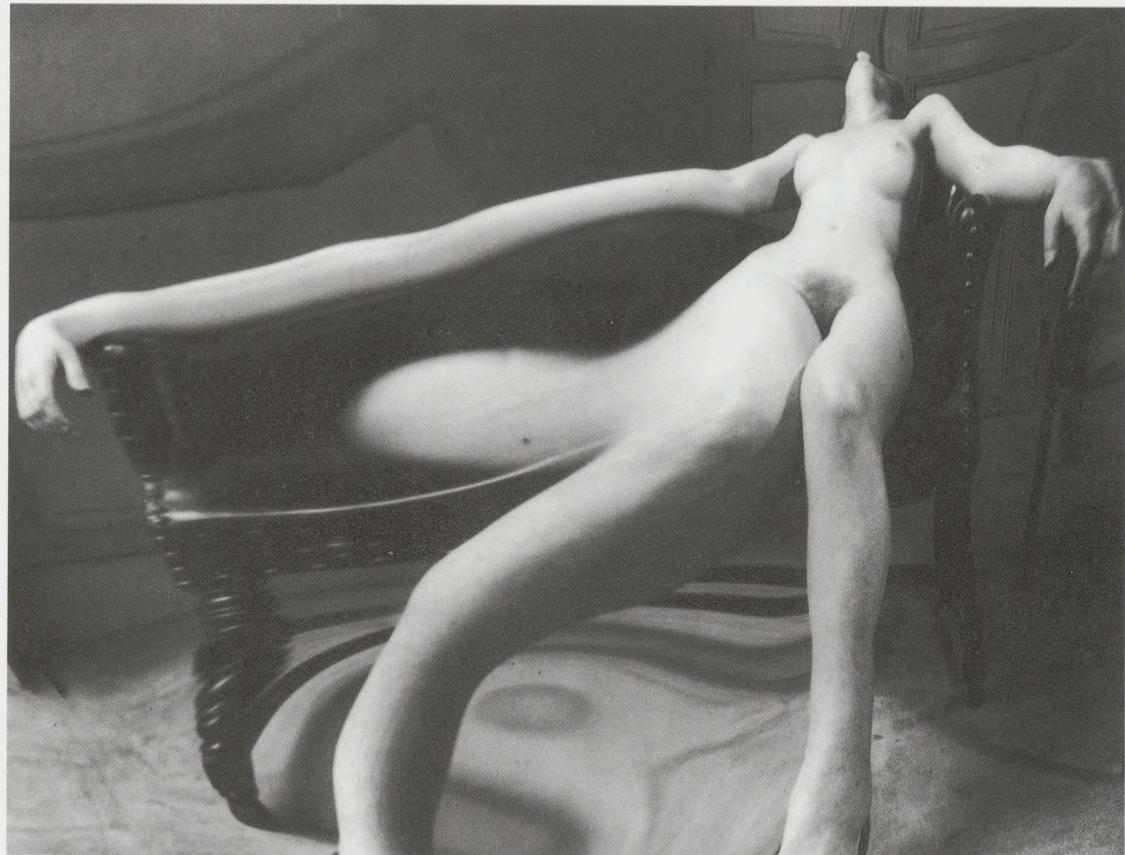


Fig. 92. André Kertész, *Distortion #79*, 1933. Collection Beady Davis, New York.



Fig. 93. André Kertész, *Distortion #29*, 1933. Pace-MacGill Gallery, New York.



Fig. 94. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1937. Collection Timothy Baum, New York.

CORPUS DELICTI

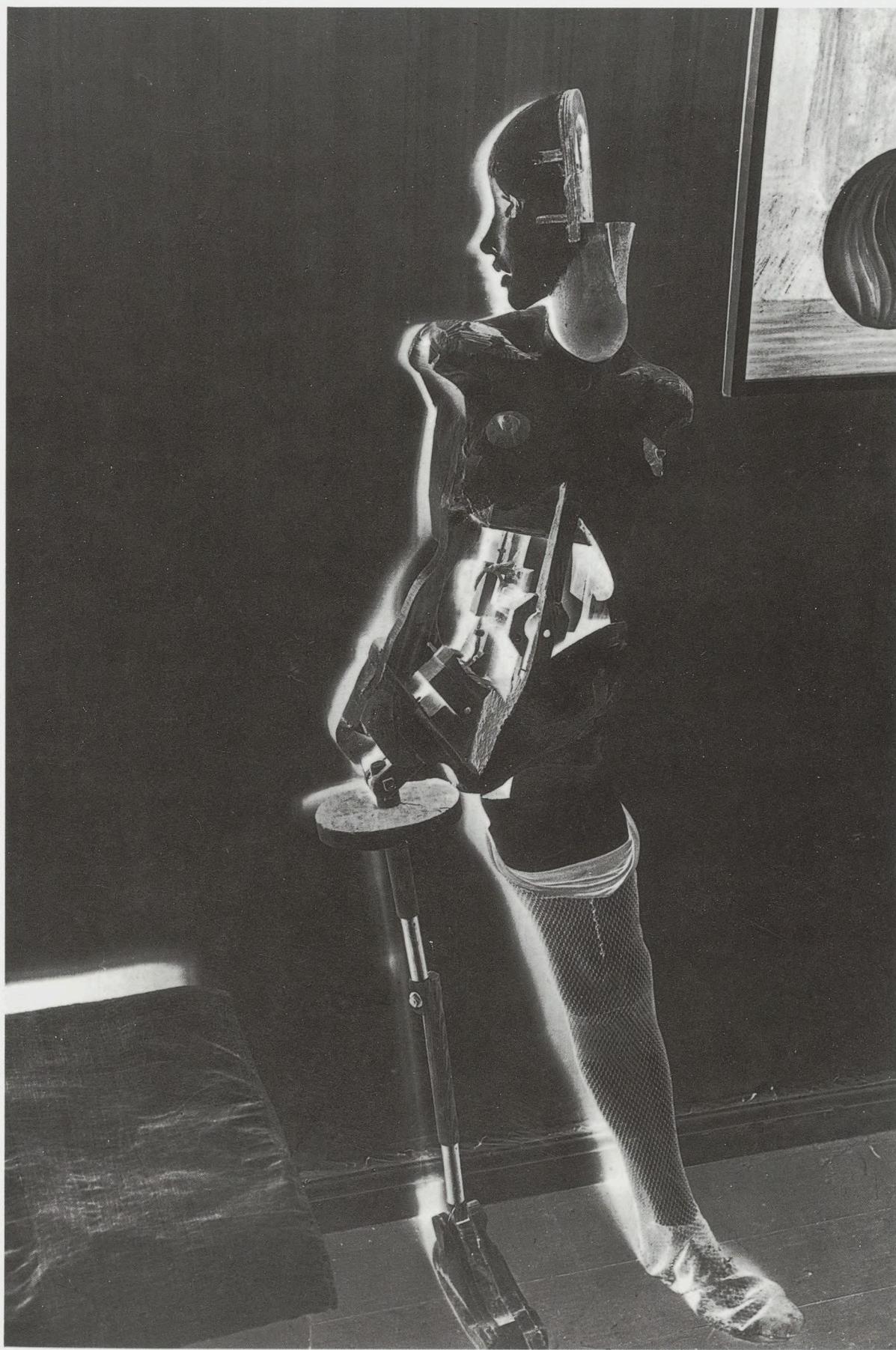


Fig. 95. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupee)*, 1934. Collection John Waddell, New York.

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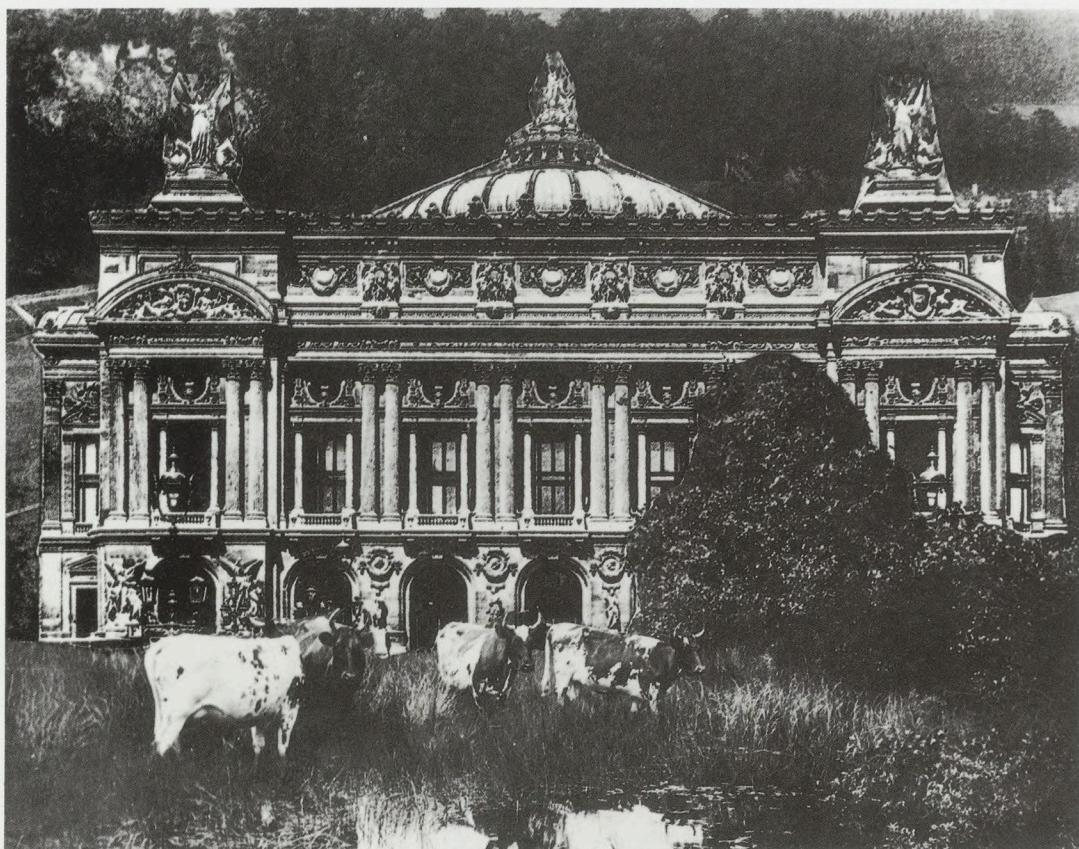


Fig. 96. René Magritte, *Paris Opera*, 1929. Detroit Institute of Art, Founders Society Purchase.



Fig. 97. Raoul Ubac, *The Bedroom (La Chambre)*, 1936. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris..

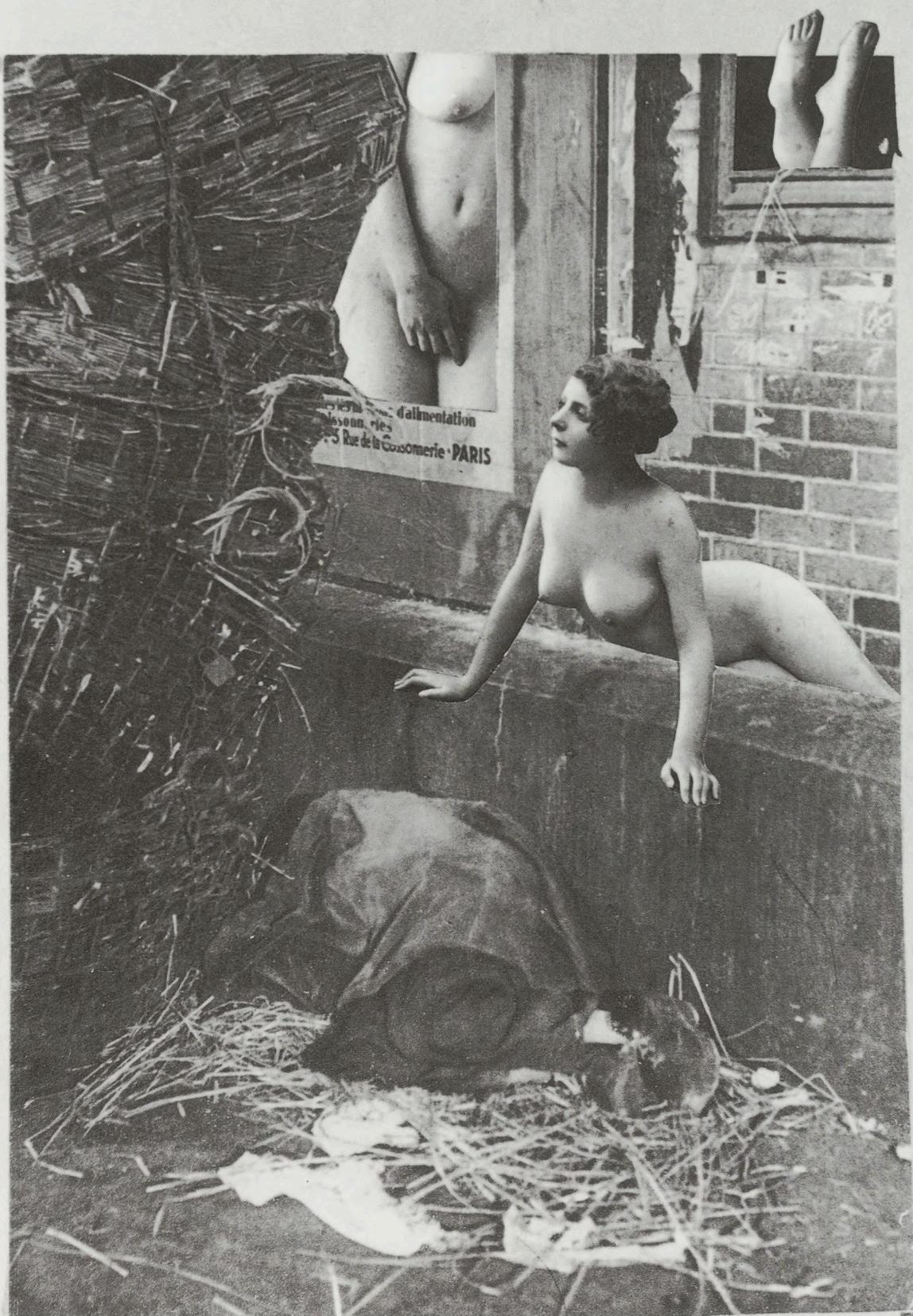


Fig. 98. Léo Malet, *The Dream of Léo Malet (Le Rêve de Léo Malet)*, 1935. Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan.

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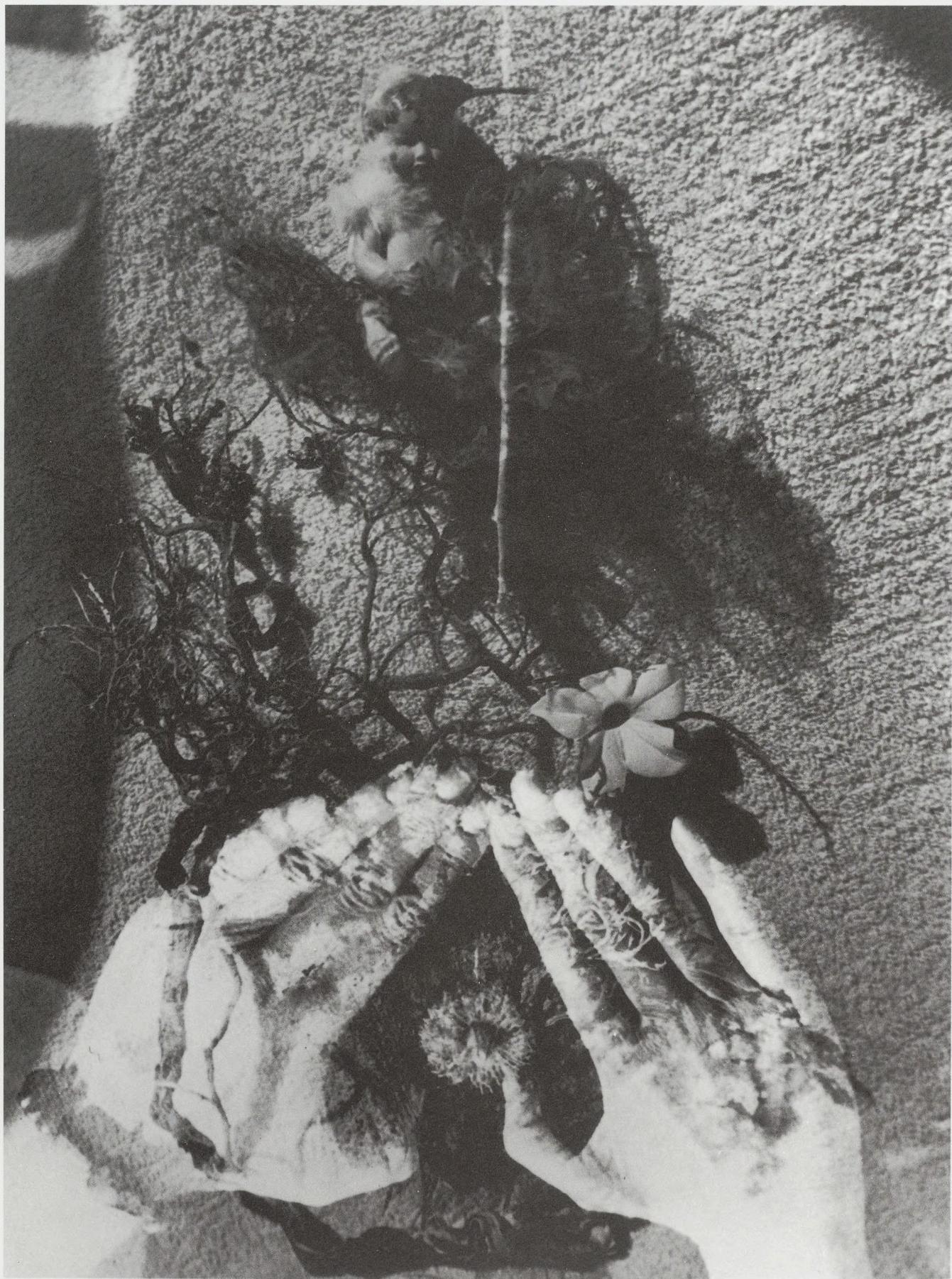


Fig. 99. Claude Cahun, *Untitled*, 1936. Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

CORPUS DELICTI

Fig. 100. Claude Cahun, *I Would Give My Life (Je donnerais ma vie)*, 1936.  
Collection Timothy Baum, New York.



Fig. 101. Claude Cahun, *Untitled*, 1926.  
Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

L'AMOUR FOU

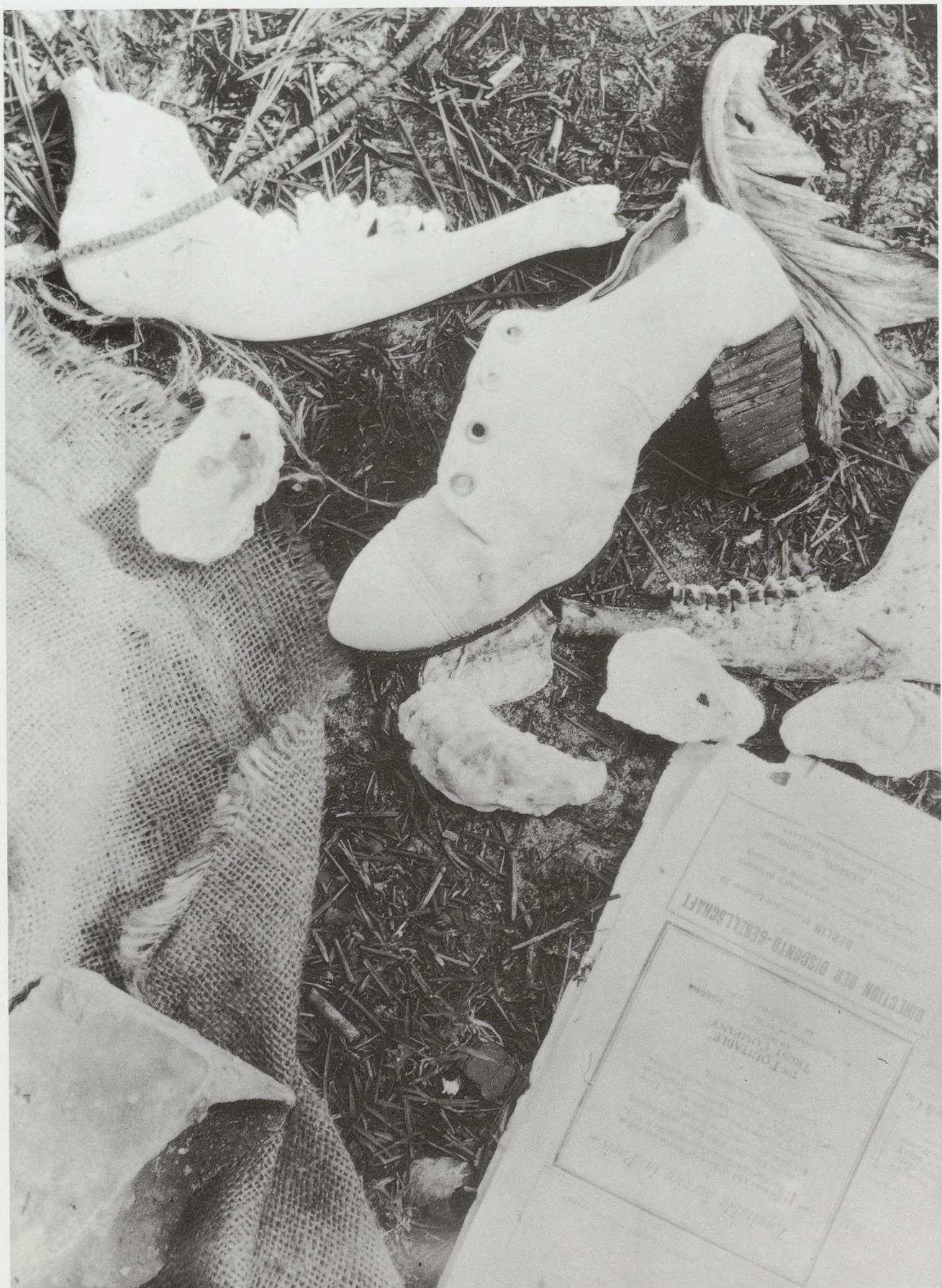


Fig. 102. Roger Parry, *Untitled*, c. 1929. Private collection, New York.

CORPUS DELICTI



Fig. 103. Marcel Mariën, *Untitled*, 1949. Prakapas Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 104. Man Ray, *Winter Collection (Collection d'hiver)*, 1936. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



# *Man Ray and Surrealist Photography*

Jane Livingston

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 105. Man Ray, 229 boulevard Raspail, 1928. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

Man Ray's formative years in New York, from his late teens until he departed for Paris in 1921 at the age of thirty-one, established many of the conditions that enabled him to become a key figure in European dada and surrealism. Almost every important artistic exposure during his early years influenced Man Ray's surrealist production even more than his dada work since surrealism developed over a longer period than dada and with a greater ideological complexity. As is almost ritually well known, the years from 1910 to 1920 in New York were an era of an intense reconstructing of modern art's syntax. Cross-fertilization among artistic traditions and nationalities occurred with virtual spontaneity. Alfred Stieglitz's Gallery 291, the Armory Show of 1913, the prominent teaching activity of such American painters as Robert Henri and George Bellows and, increasingly after 1915, the presence of such European artists and poets as Marcel Duchamp, Tristan Tzara, Francis Picabia, and Marius De Zayas made New York perhaps the only place Man Ray could have assimilated the range of ideas and technical possibilities that enabled him later to work so freely, so heterogeneously, and with a peculiarly lifelong wavering between the unorthodox and the classical.

Of the many exhibitions organized by Stieglitz, Man Ray singled out as having struck him with particular force a show of Rodin drawings in 1908, the Cézanne watercolor show of 1911, and shows of African masks and Brancusi sculptures. He also mentioned "Picasso the mystic realist, Matisse of large charms and Chinese refinement; Picabia surveyor of emotions—Hartley the revolutionist."<sup>1</sup> It is of course important to cite such experiences with art and artists during this period, but

in the case of Man Ray the nature of his early apprenticeships and sporadic vocational stints tells us more about what influenced later developments. Having decided not to take advantage of an architectural school scholarship, he worked at a number of jobs, including apprentice engraver, graphic designer with an engineering-trade publisher, and draftsman for a cartographic publisher. During this period he also spent some time studying anatomy in a medical school dissecting room and taking life-drawing classes with George Bellows and with Robert Henri. He attended as well lectures at the Francisco Ferrer Social Center, a meeting place for many of the leading leftist intellectuals of the day, including Emma Goldman, Will Durant, and a number of painters and sculptors. Independence of spirit and emphasis on the multiplicity of what a single individual may embrace and master were important concepts in the Francisco Ferrer milieu.<sup>2</sup>

By 1910 Man Ray was painting portraits, but he seems early on to have begun to resist his own stated objective of becoming a "fashionable portrait painter," as evidenced by his other paintings of the time and, increasingly, by the intellectual environment he chose. His preoccupation with dreams and the unconscious, or at least his understanding that these realities are somehow indispensable elements in visual creativity, can be documented as early as 1911 through articles he is known to have read in Stieglitz's journal, *Camera Work*. In one article, "The Unconscious in Art," a rather undistinguished piece by Benjamin de Casseres, he was struck by the phrase, "Imagination is the dream of the unconscious." Another article Man Ray commented on, Marius De Zayas's "Art

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Fig. 106. Man Ray, *Surrealist Chessboard (L'Echiquier surréaliste)*, 1934. Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan.

Is Dead," discussed the importance of unconsciously generated imagery in visual art.<sup>3</sup>

In 1913 Man Ray married Adon Lacroix, a cultivated French woman, the divorced wife of his friend, sculptor Adolf Wolff. She introduced him to the French poets, including Lautréamont, whose prose poem, *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869), was adopted by surrealism as a seminal text. From 1913 to 1915, Man Ray lived in rural Ridgefield, New Jersey, painting intensely and working and socializing with a number of artists, chess players, musicians, and poets, including William Carlos Williams and the Daniel Gallery's director, Alison Hartpence. Radical editor and writer Max Eastman was an habitué. In addition to the whimsical *Ridgefield Gazook*, a proto-dada one-issue "periodical," which he entirely wrote and illustrated, the artist commenced, near the end of his time at Ridgefield in 1915, his first experiments with photographs. He also experimented during this period with collage techniques, but his tentative forays with camera and darkroom as well as with the collage and object-making media were secondary to his development of the airbrush technique he would use throughout his painting career.

The founding of the Société Anonyme, with painter-writer Katherine Dreier and Marcel Duchamp, was the final important gesture of identification with the international avant-garde made before he moved to Paris. His most powerful New York cohorts—Duchamp and Picabia—were drawn back to Paris, and Man Ray was made to follow if only by sheer dint of example. Known in New York as a "dadaist," it was inevitable by 1921 that he would gravitate to Europe.

He was immediately taken into the circle of Parisian artists whose dominating member, perhaps even at that early stage, was André Breton, and that included Duchamp, the writer Tristan Tzara, Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard and Eluard's wife at that time, Gala, and the artists Jean Arp, Max Ernst, and André Masson. By the summer of 1921, when Man Ray arrived at the Gare St. Lazare to be met by Marcel Duchamp, surrealism was already taking shape. Later that year, Man Ray's first exhibition at the Librairie Six, a workshop owned by Philippe Soupault, became a sort of post-dada, proto-surrealist event, with a balloons-exploding-by-cigarette ceremony engineered in collaboration with Duchamp. The show included mostly paintings, with some objects, collages, and the photograph *Transatlantic* (1920). Man Ray considered this show—or decided that "the critics and public" judged this show—a failure. "I now turned all my attention to getting myself organized as a professional photographer, getting a studio and installing it to

do my work more efficiently," he said later. "I was going to make money—not wait for recognition that might come and might not come."<sup>4</sup>

During that first year in Paris, Man Ray invented "rayography," his cameraless photogram technique, and soon after began to use solarization. By 1923 he was well established as a portrait photographer and made a series of photographs of Kiki (Alice Prin), his model and lover during this period. He set up separate photography and painting studios as he became more and more able to move between his activities as painter, object maker, and photographer. His photography became increasingly independent of the literary, irony-laden manifestations so assiduously cultivated in most of his painting and sculpture. Indeed, the photographs provided an outlet for the artist's least premeditated and most unworked expressions. They are a relatively unfreighted body of work, despite the ideas surrounding them. In the context of the surrealist movement, Man Ray's photographic output may thus be called a metaphenomenon, an extended commentary on this convoluted aesthetic episode. For even as he became enmeshed in the surrealist environment, he maintained a solid immunity against many of its seductions. Yet surrealism did enable him to develop as the protean and finally integrated photographer he became. Surrealism provided both the path into his privately harbored artistic classicism and the way out of the early ambivalence he faced in the difficult arena of European vanguardism in the 1920s.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s in Paris, Man Ray collaborated on many projects with surrealist painters and poets. He illustrated books and articles with photographs; he photographed the artists themselves in many guises. The photomontage *Surrealist Chess Board* (*L'Echiquier surréaliste*, 1934; fig. 106), reproduced in the first surrealist anthology of poems, includes twenty portraits arrayed in rows of four. The figures who sat for the pictures comprise a roster of the key personalities with whom Man Ray was involved in the early thirties: Arp, Breton, Victor Brauner, René Char, René Crevel, Dali, de Chirico, Eluard, Ernst, Giacometti, Georges Hugnet, Magritte, E. L. T. Mesens, Miró, Benjamin Péret, Picasso, Gui Rosey, Yves Tanguy, and Tristan Tzara, in addition to a self-portrait.

Some of Man Ray's most directly collaborative activity was in the creation of his four films—*The Return to Reason* (1923), *Emak Bakia* (1926), *L'Etoile de Mer* (1928), and *The Mystery of the Chateau of the Dice* (1929). His films are generally considered to be "independent from the surrealist canons . . . if one compares them with such surrealist classics as Buñuel's *An An-*



Fig. 107. Man Ray, *Tears (Larmes)*, c. 1930. Jedermann Collection, N. A.

MAN RAY AND SURREALIST PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 108. Man Ray, *Tears (Larmes)*, c. 1930. Jedermann Collection, N. A.

*dalusian Dog*, 1929, and *L'Age d'or*, 1930." The comment of writer Arturo Schwarz—that Man Ray's films "painlessly and naturally embodied the surrealist spirit Breton had been seeking in film-makers," and that he achieved in his films, more successfully and spontaneously than most other surrealists had, the goal of "estrangement" described by Breton—can be applied even more powerfully to many of Man Ray's photographs.<sup>5</sup>

Never a dogmatic partisan or a fully credulous ideologue, Man Ray continually expressed a studied empathy with his peers, even while he diverged from them. He could be the most subtle and inventive of collaborators, the securely authoritative artist; also at times he veered inexplicably into some realm of doubt, becoming heavy-handed, aggressively banal. He was deeply clever and blithely naive, diverted while not fascinated by tensions between image and language, but stubbornly unproficient in languages other than English. Ingenuous to a fault, he was at the same time elusive, cunning, deliberately enigmatic. Simultaneously protagonist and safe voyeur, his passivity before many of the objects of his apparently desultory attention coexists with the incontrovertible fact of his having activated the most tenaciously enduring aesthetic objects for our intellectual arousal.

In the context of the present undertaking, a distillation and reconstruction of surrealism itself in its most satisfactory core, Man Ray's photographs create a complex unifying corpus, an anchoring body of images around which others can both function autonomously and take on identities with some reference, although usually it is the others that more closely conform to the letter of surrealist ideology. In at least one sense, Man Ray was more the abiding dadaist than he ever was truly a surrealist. Dada made of all existing artifacts and ideas the potential stuff of absurdist theater, an inexhaustible source for the gratuitous aestheticization of the innately nonaesthetic. André Breton's surrealism claimed to go further by categorically abolishing our necessary claim on dualistic perceptual redemptiveness, our conventional faith in separable conscious and unconscious minds, locating instead aesthetic meaning in often unpremeditated epiphanies emerging from the random field of consciousness. The dramatist and theoretician Antonin Artaud, of course, went still further into anarchy than Breton, obliterating all pretense to any salvation through the human faculty of conscious discrimination. Breton would trace all potentially aesthetic experience to a relativistic, hallucinatory, undifferentiated continuum of consciousness, a consciousness always potentially activated by desire, whereas Artaud would extinguish delectation altogether. Man Ray was perhaps too much the

reflexive, dualistic, Western thinker, too much the pragmatist and too much the invested classicist, ever to capitulate totally to surrealism's cultural agnosticism. Yet, even as early as the beginning of the 1920s, he produced images that can now be seen to have laid groundwork for the development of the surrealist ideology as it matured in the 1930s and 1940s.

In the spirit of dada and surrealism, it is proper that Man Ray's greatest achievement was in the medium he professed to take least seriously. For all his life he maintained a vacillating attitude toward his photography, sometimes implying that he was a painter who also worked in other genres. He tended on one hand adamantly to defend, and on the other to denigrate, his photographic production. More than once he alluded to the "contempt" required to make art out of the meaningless set of mechanical apparatuses enlisted in the task of creating photographs. That he both suspected his own temperamental antipathy to the surrealist rejection of static or isolable values and resisted acknowledging this surprising heresy is suggested in his stubborn allegiance to himself as first and foremost a painter. It was that medium he claimed most to revere and to attempt patiently to master. It was the endeavor through which he tried most earnestly not only to be a surrealist but a modernist, and it was the medium he never truly mastered in the service of either cause. As persistently as he engaged painting as a vocation, he was unable to turn it to the task of manifesting his best creative power. It is clear from the present vantage point that, precisely in professing a contempt for the photographic medium, he succeeded in making it work fluently for him.

Surrealism—Breton's surrealism—tried to divert the project of culture from its fixation on aestheticism so that culture might become more naturally, less self-consciously, aesthetic than it would be in an academic or Platonic system of artistic values. In the face of his obsessive commitment to a revolution of consciousness, Breton would not acknowledge "ideal artistic values." But, inevitably perhaps, it was the seemingly inexorable power of the categorically aesthetic rather than the ideological that immortalized the surrealist episode. Part of Man Ray's staying power, in contrast to the ephemeral destiny of many of his peers, lies simply in his acceptance of modernist artfulness in the face of surrealist iconoclasm. Admittedly, this notion is in direct opposition to his repeatedly professed dedication to the nonaesthetic, but part of his longevity also resides in his slyness, his successful obfuscation of his own aestheticism. He functioned best as an artist when he was drawn into some kind of unintentional, or unschematic, relation to his

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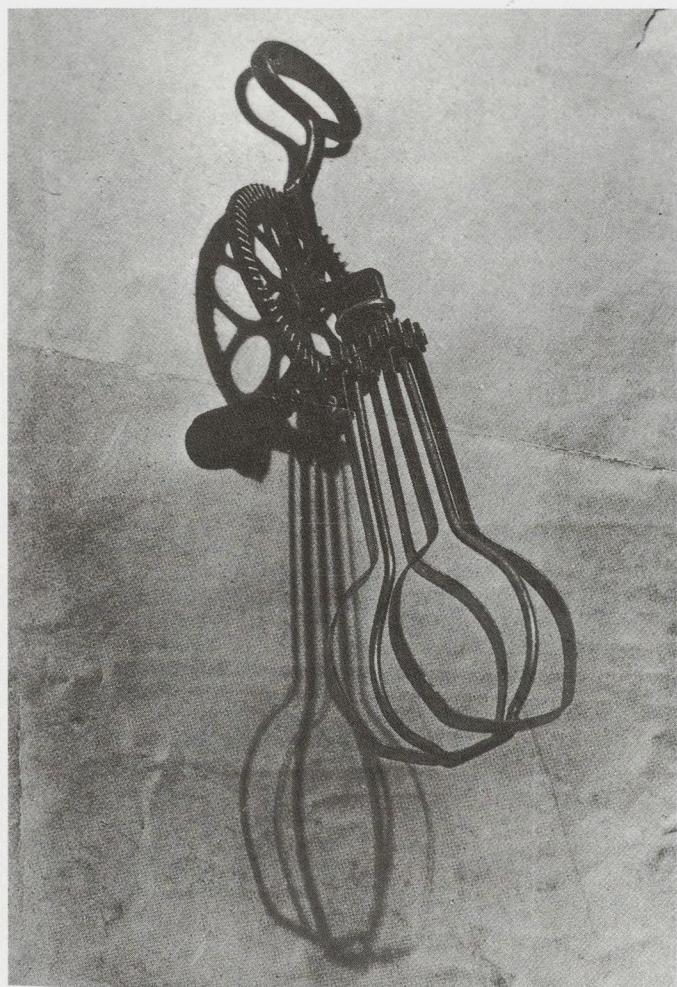


Fig. 109. Man Ray, *Woman*, 1918.  
Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan.

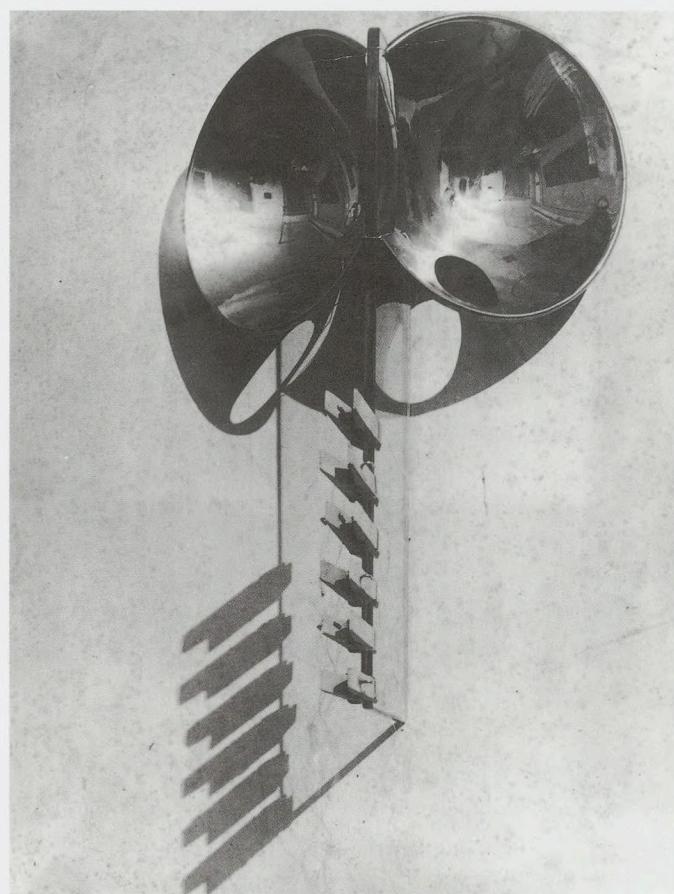


Fig. 110. Man Ray, *Man*, 1918.  
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

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Fig. 111. Man Ray, *Moving Sculpture*, 1920. Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan.



Fig. 112. Man Ray, *Moving Sculpture*, 1920. Jedermann Collection, N. A.

subjects. For example, he used created or found objects as subjects for photographs more consistently than he used them as sculptures. His treatment of such strange artifacts was as though to co-opt them rather than to keep them.

A few underlying themes echo throughout Man Ray's photographic oeuvre of the 1920s and 1930s. It is quite proper that his first full-fledged photographs of found (or rather, found-and-set-up) objects, *Man and Woman* (both 1918; figs. 110, 109), are emblems of sex. These dada-inspired works are clearly humorous but also strangely authoritative analogues to the psychophysical attributes of male and female. In them and in a few other images of the period is manifest his awakening to the efficacy of the aleatory image—process itself and its residue—as a tool for art. In 1918, without realizing it, Man Ray stood between his two mentors, Stieglitz and Duchamp. *Man and Woman* constitute our evidence for this position, embodying as they do both an ironic bow to Stieglitz's formalist modernism and a welcoming of Duchamp's admission of the calculatedly absurd as the new sine qua non of the artist's capacity for justifying his existence. If *Man and Woman* figure as harbingers of future development, *Moving Sculpture* (figs. 111, 112) stands as a point of exit from dada and entry into Man Ray's surrealist period. This photograph of swaying windblown urban laundry hung out to dry, this unbelievably elastic image (one that appears in differently cropped versions apparently each time it is reproduced) is the single most cogent instance in his photographic work of the reciprocity of content and name. *Moving Sculpture* activates the image by its caption. It is really a dada photograph. In contrast, the works more squarely within Man Ray's surrealist period nearly without exception communicate a comparative indifference to the marriage of image and name.

From the present view, *Man*, *Woman*, and *Moving Sculpture*, more than the famous *Dust Breeding* (a 1920 photograph of Duchamp's "Large Glass") or the eminently Duchampian *Transatlantic*—a quintessentially dada representation of domestic debris—truly portend later events. Rather than looking either to Duchamp's protominimalist cerebration or Stieglitz's visceralizing sensibility, *Moving Sculpture* claims its own eerily new atmosphere. Essentially dada, it nevertheless prepares the way for Breton's surrealist convocation of arrested process, the stop-action mystique, the convulsive beauty residing in the extraordinary ordinary. This idea, more than the Duchampian one, would echo contrapuntally in Man Ray's photography through the ensuing ten years.

Eventually, a single subject, the human—and espe-

cially female—body, would emerge as the overriding concern of surrealist photography. Man Ray participated in this trend, although he cannot be said to have been its main exponent. He continued to use inanimate objects in his photographs not as metaphors but usually as gratuitous analogues to ideas about art. Increasingly, however, the important photographs presented literally corporeal imagery. Man Ray came to want the human body to carry nearly the entire burden of his aesthetic project. He tended to use the same body, the same model, repeatedly during whatever period included her important existence in his life: Kiki of Montparnasse, Lee Miller (his assistant and student), Nusch Eluard, Dora Maar, or Juliet. The photographs are irrefutably a steady testament to the artist's successive cathexes to his subjects, implicit in the repeated depiction of them and in the idealizing and erotically charged nature of their representation. Yet the artist often rises above the level of specific obsessionalism to a more generalized exploitation of an idealized sexuality. This clever hurdling of a voyeurism that can only produce kitsch, and of the sadomasochistic obsessiveness that, especially in the camera's eye, usually results in pornography, may be explained partly by surrealist ideology as the artist understood it. That is, it may be that Man Ray was consciously true to Breton's austere revolutionary dictum, which would stop at nothing to reconcile ego and libido. But it seems more likely that Man Ray summoned his own trained artistic vision, shaped in part by Stieglitz and Duchamp, to skirt the dangerous territory of sexist exploitation that stretched before him. Using imagery that would seem to entail disastrous side effects, he successfully proceeded to universalize some of surrealism's precepts and to assist in the promulgation of its aesthetic, if not its philosophy.

Man Ray had begun systematically using the camera in November 1915 after his first important show of paintings, because he needed photos of them for the press. Shortly after this, he began to make photographic portraits, prompted in large part, he always insisted, by financial considerations. The first *cliché verre*, in which the image is scratched directly onto the negative, a technique he would over the decades intermittently return to, was made in 1917; the first rayograph happened in 1921. After the important dada-influenced and protosurrealist photographs already discussed, the artist's more truly (but never purely) surrealist activity commenced in 1924,

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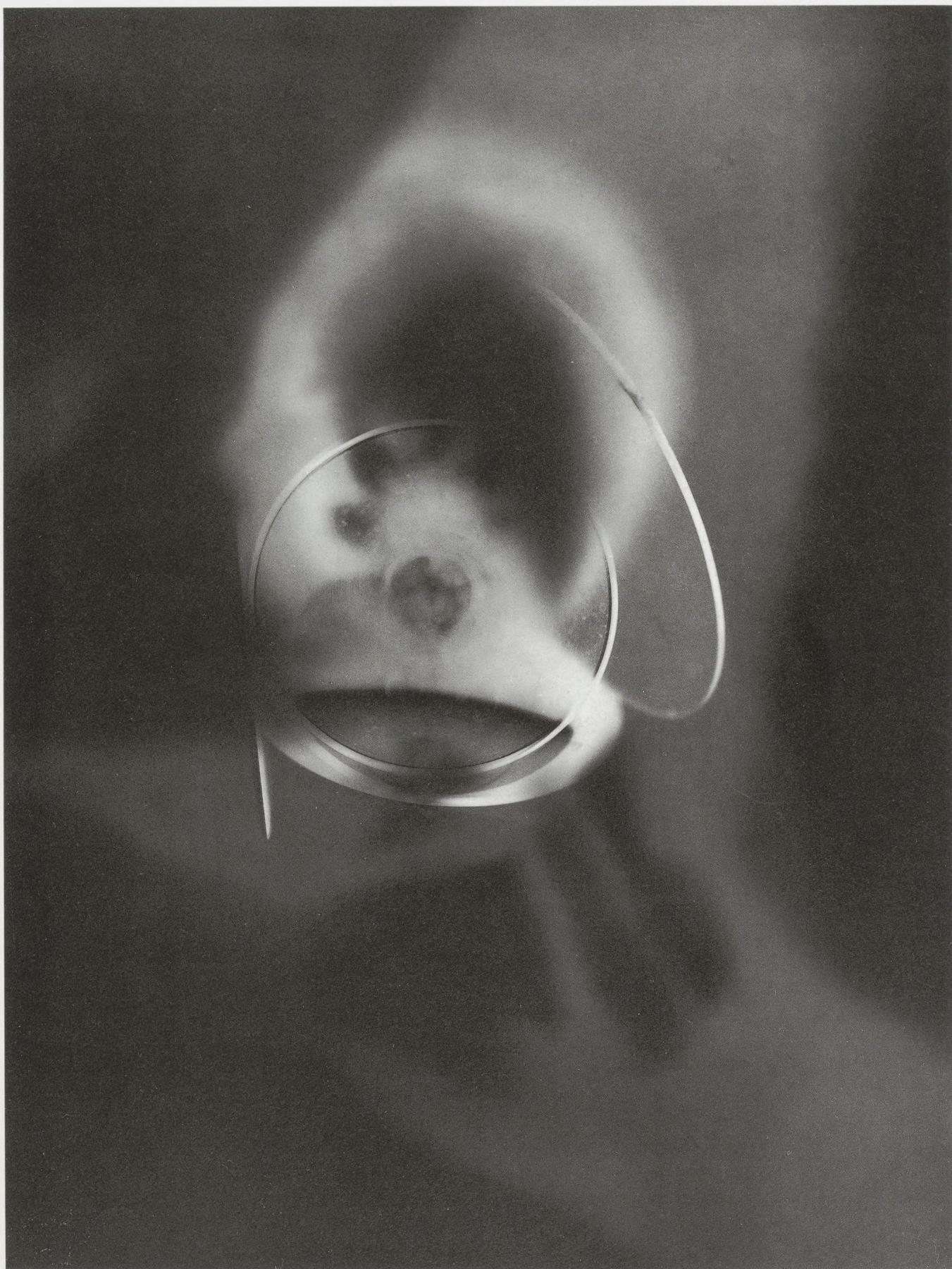


Fig. 113. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1936. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

with the appearance of seven photos in the first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* in December. Among them was the nude image of Lee Miller, *The Return to Reason* (1923; fig. 67), apparently a still frame from the film of that title.

From 1924 through the 1930s, he continued to contribute to surrealist periodicals and in the course of this activity invented a succession of substYLES as well as often quite distinct aesthetic devices, each one of which became successively adopted in surrealism's syntax. Both the solarized *Primacy of Matter over Mind* (fig. 52) and the two Sade images (*Hommage à D. A. F. de Sade* and *Monument à D. A. F. de Sade*; fig. 6) were reproduced in early issues of *La Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, and the artist's frequent presence from 1933 to 1937 in *Minotaure* established him as perhaps the most resourceful artist-photographer of his era. Aside from the periodicals, of course, several now-legendary books featuring Man Ray's work were produced, among them André Breton's *Nadja* (1928); *1929*, poems by Benjamin Péret and Louis Aragon with four erotic photographs illustrating the seasons; *L'Amour fou* (1937); and *Facile* (1935), with text by Paul Eluard and photographs of Nusch Eluard (figs. 86, 87).

It is clear that Man Ray's association with the surrealist movement nourished his primary role as visual artist and documentor. His self-awareness as an explicator of surrealism's iconoclastic metaphysics and his intimate collusiveness with its theoreticians, primarily André Breton, testify to his consciousness of the intellectual dynamics behind his artworks. But it is important to insist again that he rejected many of surrealism's premises. He shared, for example, in Breton's revolt against a certain kind of humanism, but he never fully embraced the obliteration of the distinction between aesthetics and experience that followed from the surrealists' unconditional submission to the imperiousness of desire. Man Ray's *Monument à D. A. F. de Sade* (fig. 6) in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* perfectly conveys his own appropriation and subtle subversion of the surrealist atmospherics that surrounded the issue of Sadist desire. Several levels of presentation occur in this image. First is the confining of the anatomical detail within a linear boundary that both visually frames and conceptually alters it. The appearance of the body, which we know to extend beyond the imposed outer shape and yet which seems somehow complete as an evocation of the anatomy, arouses simultaneous feelings of tension and resolution. The circumscribing shape, the inverted cross, is itself a symbol—indeed, an icon—playing against the powerful symbolism of the idealized female buttocks.

The title names the image in ironic reference to the Marquis de Sade, and yet, unlike the typical Duchampian engagement of image and caption, even in this most literary work, Man Ray backs away from the deepest level of synergism between image and title by making the image self-sufficient. Even without a caption, the carnal and the transcendent symbologies reinforce one another.

To claim that Man Ray in his photographic mode was not an intrinsically pure surrealist is not to deny that he was an intimate participant in surrealism's dialectic. In fact, he profoundly influenced the direction surrealism took as it moved from its early post-dada, sometimes rather fragmented or speculative phase, into the more focused and disciplined system of ideas it espoused after 1928. Perhaps Man Ray's central intuition at this time had to do with his lifelong preoccupation with the deracinated object as subject for aesthetic play, as evidenced by the photographs he produced to illustrate various surrealist treatises.

Surrealism as a "philosophy," more than surrealism as an excuse for art making, lived in special tension with the object. For the surrealist, the object (despite disclaimers, often unregenerately an aestheticized object, whether plastic or poetic) existed or was important only in relation to consciousness of it. Man Ray, like Breton and the rest of the surrealists, eschewed an essentialist or Platonic view of noumena, a reality known but outside experience. For many surrealists a relativistic and sensuously extremist view of objects as objects of gratification (or, as Man Ray would have it, affection) became a license to undermine the usual exigencies of taste and tact. But for Man Ray taste and tact returned episodically, reflexively, from some latent realm of modernist being, to determine his sensibility.

The surrealist object was nonutilitarian. This premise configured radically different patterns within the vagrant tendencies of surrealism's artists. Magritte's *God the Eighth Day* (fig. 200) or Max Ernst's *Health Through Sports* (*La Santé par le sport*; fig. 35) come to mind as examples of images of transmogrified objects. These works are about the forcible negation of any reference to worldly functionalism; they conjure up a notion of gratuitousness based on the mutually canceling bonding of unlike bodies. But it was Man Ray who engaged the issue of the nonutilitarian surrealist object more profoundly. Bypassing the always problematical surrealist trick of willfully combining absurdly disjunctive images to evoke surprise or an idea of nonutility, he penetrated to a structurally more basic, more compelling feel for the *inutile* by confronting the real and then shifting or

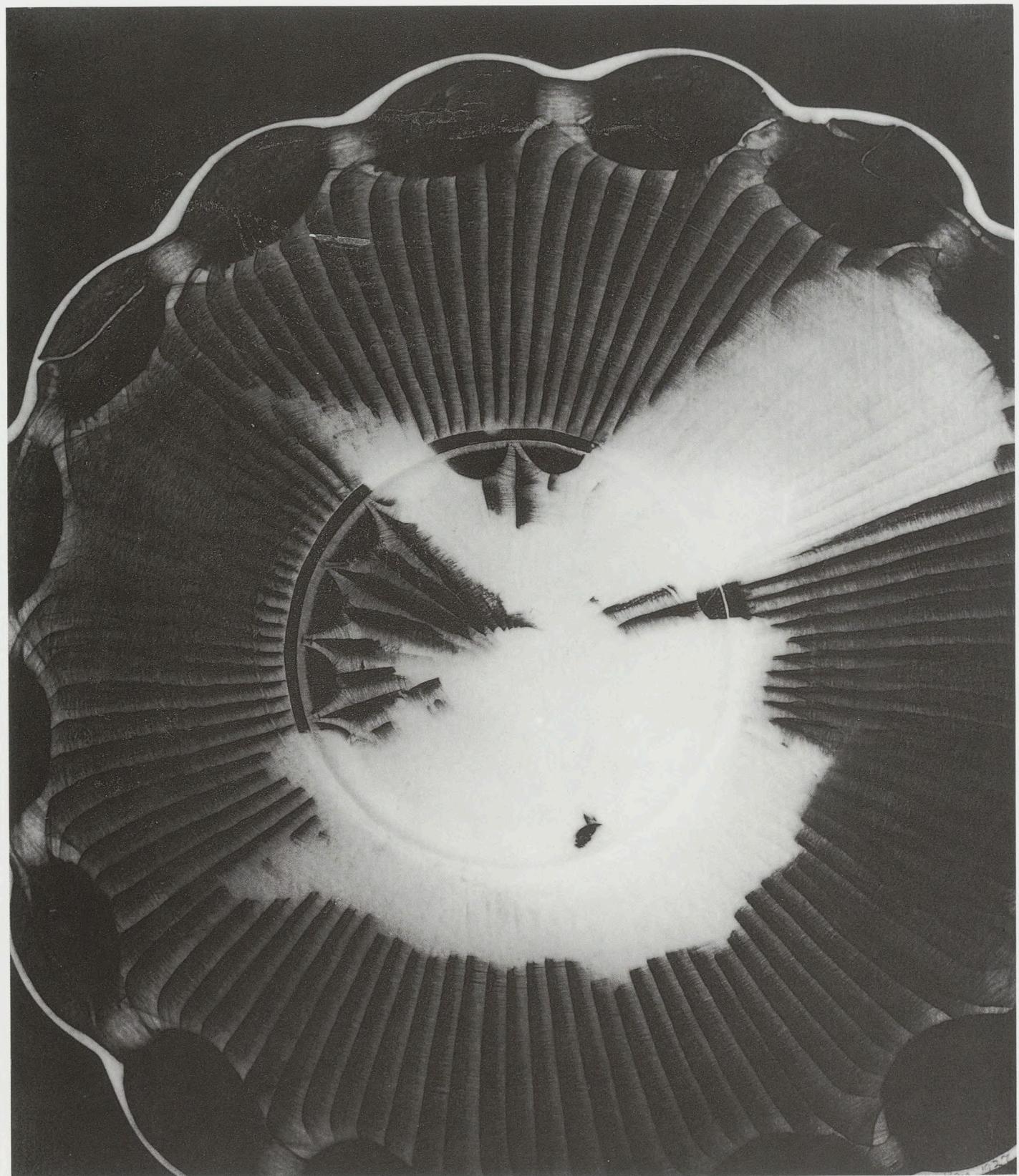


Fig. 114. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1927. Studio Marconi, Milan.

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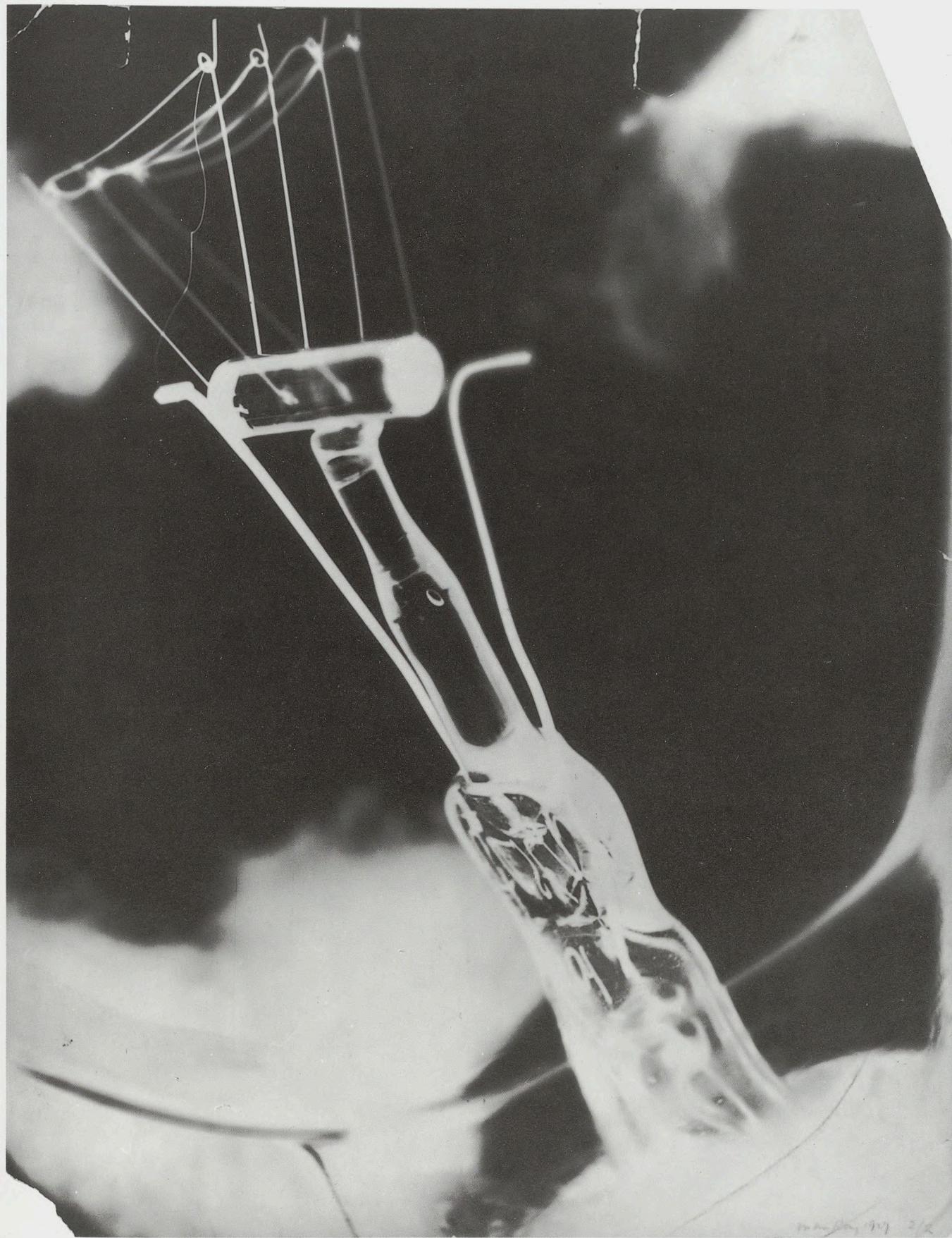


Fig. 115. Man Ray, *Untitled* (from *Electricité*), 1931. Collection Gérard Levy, Paris.

heightening its appearance, both within its intrinsic capacity for being rendered strange.

The idea of the surrealist object, which had its genesis in the ready-mades of Duchamp and the early dada objects, underwent its own evolution through the 1920s and 1930s, a conceptual progression that André Breton would articulate programmatically, but that Man Ray actually prefigured and subsequently transcended at every step of its development. In "Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality" (1924), Breton described the way in which objects arising from sleep-induced imagery might be physically recreated—for example, a strange book he had dreamt of, with a carved wooden gnome for a spine and pages made of thick black wool. By making such objects tangible, Breton declared, "perhaps I would . . . help to ruin those concrete trophies that are so detestable, and throw greater discredit on reasonable beings and objects. There would be carefully constructed machines that would have no use; minutely detailed maps of cities . . . we would feel forever incapable of founding."<sup>7</sup>

This idea of the way in which objects might be used to call into question the apparently self-evident validity of communally agreed upon "utilitarian reality" gradually shifted in the later 1920s until, by 1931, Breton and his fellow surrealists, now under the sway of dialectical materialism, endeavored to abolish any distinction between the real and hallucinatory or dream-induced. The point has been encapsulated by Dawn Ades: "In the Surrealist situation of the object, of 1935, Breton further suggests that the Surrealist object was the dialectical reconciliation of two terms (one real and one imagined) so violently contradictory for man, perception and representation."<sup>8</sup> Salvador Dali is often thought of as the key exemplar of this eradication of distinction between the concrete and the imagined or the real and the possible. In this connection, not only his visual works are cited, but also his text for *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (no. 3 [December 1931]), in which he went so far as to enumerate six categories of surrealist object, which translate roughly as automatically originated, transubstantiated, projected, wrapped, machined, and molded.

The general trend after 1932, toward a simplification of the surrealist object away from the earlier delirium of interpretation, is customarily thought to have been largely a result of a theoretical shift conditioned by the admission into the movement of an increasingly Marxist understanding of fantasy and utilitarian reality, of desire and need, as predualistically inseparable. However, at least one artist besides Marcel Duchamp—and perhaps

the only one who operated within the ranks of surrealism during 1929–1930—wholly and elaborately prefigured this radical inseparability of fantasy and daily fact. This was Man Ray, in his photographs.

The cameraless rayographs, those images executed by direct interaction of light and chemicals, solved the problem of presenting the real object in such a way as to establish its self-evident corporeality and yet also to push it into the realm of the meta-real. The trace of the actual object, usually identifiable at least in a rudimentary way, shows itself concretely in the exposure. (There are striking exceptions to this legibility. Some of the most beautiful and richly compelling rayographs, such as the untitled rayograph [fig. 113], merely hint at the existence of "real" or recognizable objects, in this case the strong suspicion, but not certainty, of glass lenses.) Operating both as an analogue to the cast shadow, a phenomenon the artist employed as a talisman in his photographs from the beginning, and simply as the unmodeled residue of the thing's outer form registered through a simple photochemical action, the rayograph surpassed the camera-produced photograph in its univalent transformation of the real object into a sign or trace.

In his best photographs, Man Ray was seldom concerned with the overt juxtaposition of unlike things per se. He wanted instead to let the main object, whether a woman's body or a pair of painted hands, express its own capacity for self-transformation and for impinging on other objects in terms dictated by itself. It is often this organically unitary nature of the photographs that distinguishes them from so much surrealist painting, including Man Ray's own, which is characterized by an atmosphere of contrivance. The surrealist drama inherent in letting the photograph's unadorned subject establish within the confines of its own nature the sensation of shifting the real into the realm of self-questioning occurs most powerfully in relatively straight images. The untitled silhouetted profile of a woman's head made in 1930 (fig. 116), for instance, attains its distinctive character merely by having been printed as a negative. The erotically provocative quality of *Head, New York* (fig. 49) and *Anatomies* (fig. 50) derives in part from the angles of vision by which they approach the body; these establish newly intimate channels of access to the body, and the association of anomalously positioned corporeal details suggests other body parts. His appropriations of female neck and chin allude unmistakably to the anatomy of the opposite sex, distilling some idea of erectile human flesh and bone. These photographs belong with the two studies of hats (figs. 26, 27), which were created with explicit reference to sexual images. Funny and potent works,

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Fig. 116. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1930. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

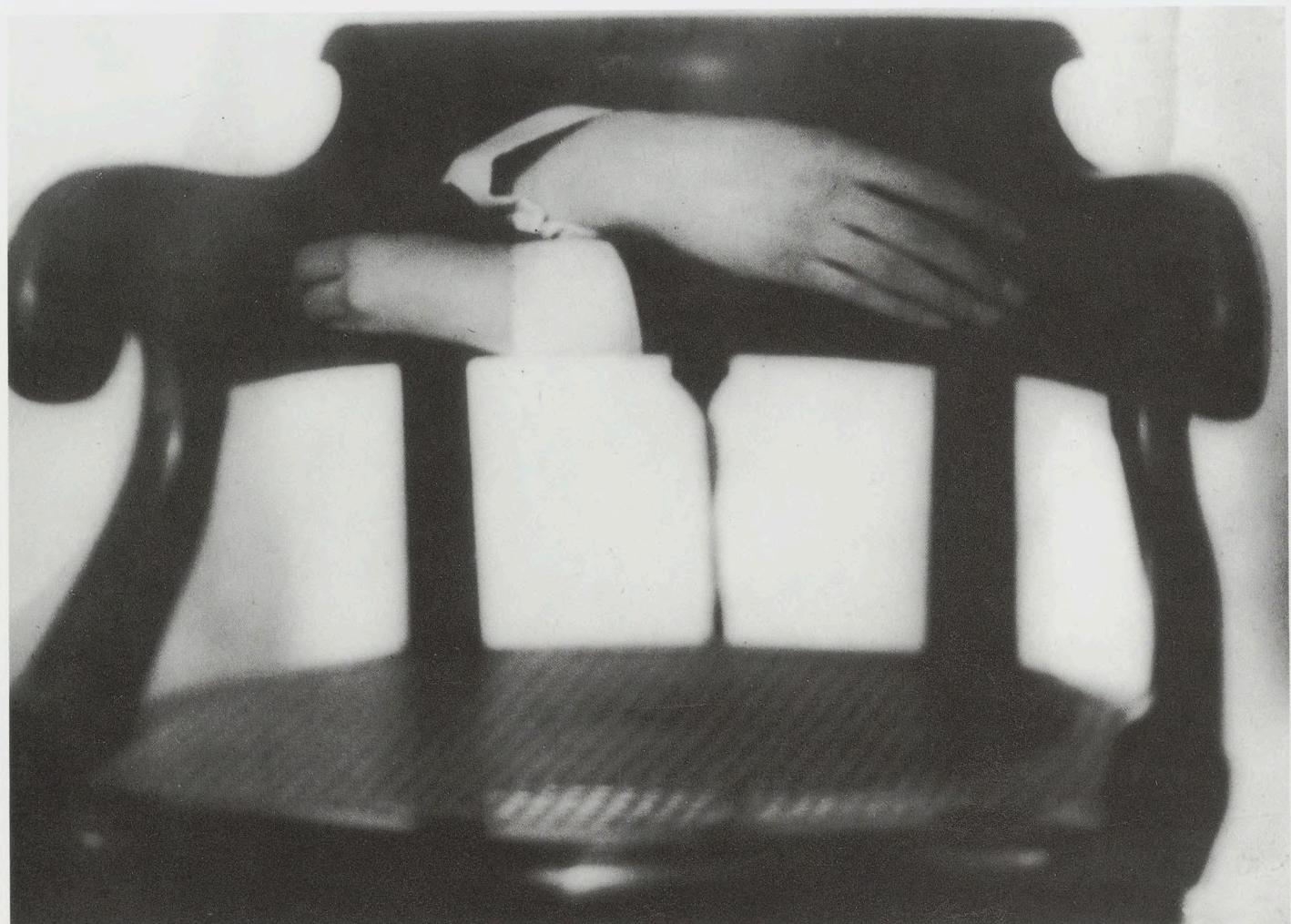


Fig. 117. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1924. Collection Aleta Wallach, Beverly Hills, California.

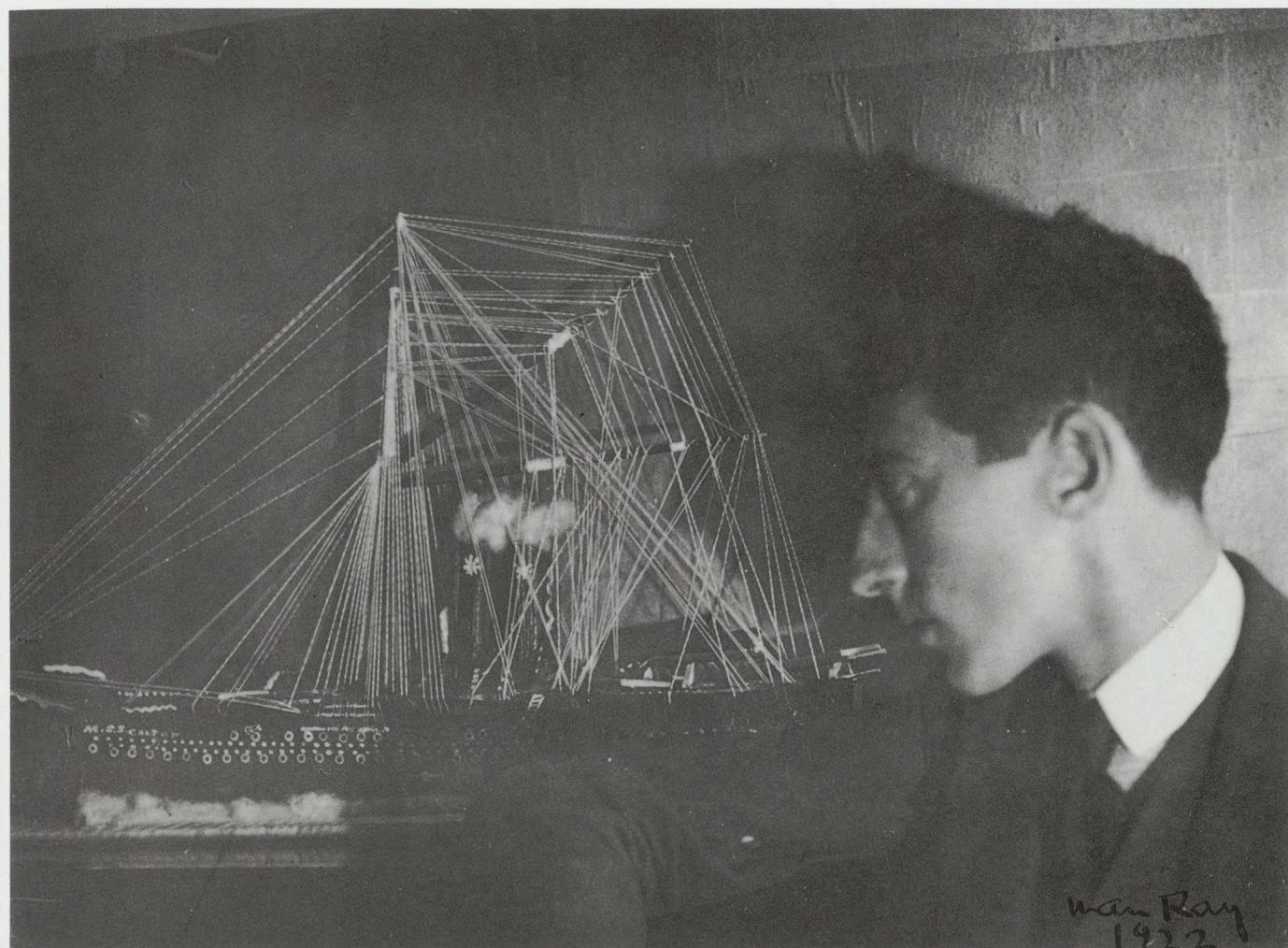


Fig. 118. Man Ray, *The Drunken Boat (Le Bateau ivre)*, 1922. Collection Gérard Levy, Paris.



Fig. 119. Man Ray, *Waste Land (Terrain vague)*, 1929. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

they rely merely on familiar objects in blunt isolation, caught from an unusual angle, offering themselves for scrutiny in a cleanly decontextualized way, yet anchored in surrealism's bedrock by virtue of their sophisticated analogy to the organs of sex.

It is true that Man Ray was not categorically opposed to deploying the classic surrealist device of grafting together unrelated species to produce works of art, but this strategy seldom interested him. When he did resort to absurdist combines in the photographs, he tended simply to print multiple exposures, rather than resort to montage or, even more, to collage techniques. This is to say that Man Ray—like Brassai or much of Roger Parry or Boiffard, and unlike Bellmer, Magritte, Ubac, or Hugnet—was fundamentally exploiting and respecting photography's own repertory of effect rather than indifferently using photography interchangeably with collage or taking unusual pains to alter the print's surface by emulsion manipulations or additives. Two of the greatest images employing multiple exposures are the untitled 1929 photograph shown in figure 117 and *Tomorrow (Demain)*; fig. 131). It is significant that he chose not to name the exceedingly uncharacteristic and hauntingly provocative 1929 work, in which two disjunctive images—a chair and a pair of crossed cuffed wrists—are imposed by double exposure one upon the other. It is as though his occasional impulse potentially to alter our experience of the presented thing through an appended name, as in the dadaist *Enigma of Isidore Ducasse* or the protosurrealist *The Drunken Boat* (*Le Bateau ivre*; fig. 118), was obviated when the images themselves make an internal double entendre or a literary point in any degree self-evident. It is part of the strength of his photographs, in contrast to many others that emerged under the umbrella of surrealism, that they operate with relative transparency. What provokes the imagination in Man Ray's surrealist photos does not need to be internally polyvalent or linguistically animated. It is as though the artist refused to contrive the surrealist experience but, rather, attained to it.

The case for Man Ray as an unproblematical surrealist in his photographic production, rather than as the slightly supererogatory figure, the meta-surrealist described here, must be made not on the basis of the main oeuvre, but on the basis of the few examples that partake more fully of this movement's essence. One of the most authoritative surrealist photographs ever made is the untitled photograph of 229 boulevard Raspail (fig. 105). In the entire surrealist body of art there is no better example of the power to parlay the most disarmingly direct, even monolithic, image into the most ineffably disorienting visual

experience. To photograph a presumably solid Parisian building so that it comes to seem an unfinished or partly destroyed facade and further, to photograph it in such a way as to create a feeling of improbably vertiginous perspective that elicits sensations of almost claustrophobic distortion, and yet to maintain an image entirely within the realm of what is possible to observe in everyday experience of the actual—this is to create a surreal image. Faced with the evidence of this photograph, we simply cannot be certain where the camera might have been placed in relation to the building in order to achieve its crazily acrophobic spatial sense. Nor can we finally locate the “reality” of the object, as a bodiless facade rather than a conventional fleshed-out building, in the object itself or in its photographed image. We cannot simply identify the object as an ordinary building front that has been made to appear broken by some technical manipulation of the photograph. This ambiguity without overt trickery or combinatory manipulation functions at the very heart of what Man Ray understood to be the surrealist aesthetic.<sup>9</sup>

As was suggested earlier, the notion of Man Ray as an artist who used names—captions—to activate his imagery in the spirit of dada or surrealist linguistic-imagist games is almost universally misunderstood. Man Ray is generally regarded as a paragon of the artist as Duchampian language player yet he in fact rarely attached names (beyond mere identification) to his photographs. This is not true of his paintings nor of most of the *clichés verres*, nor of the objects. But most of the photographs are untitled. When the photos are named, the image is still usually allowed to speak for itself, even in cases when certain photographs, such as *Winter Collection (Collection d'hiver)*; fig. 104) or the images of Nusch Eluard in *Facile* (figs. 86, 87), were used to illustrate tendentious surrealist texts and thus had to bear a peculiar burden of often obscure meaning by virtue of their presence as illustration or as part of a collaborative endeavor.

The captionless or somewhat enigmatically named presentation of such images as the hats, reproduced in *Minotaure* or in *Collection d'hiver* or *Terrain Vague* (all 1929; figs. 104, 119), or *Explosante-fixe* (fig. 75)—that image Breton used to illustrate his theory of convulsive beauty, the moment of arrest before centrifugal anticlimax—or the untitled photograph shown in figure 20 dramatize how their naked offering-up makes them surpass their original identity as highly contextualized images, part of reciprocal or collaborative works. In some enigmatic way, these photographs are susceptible of extraction from their original context and even of

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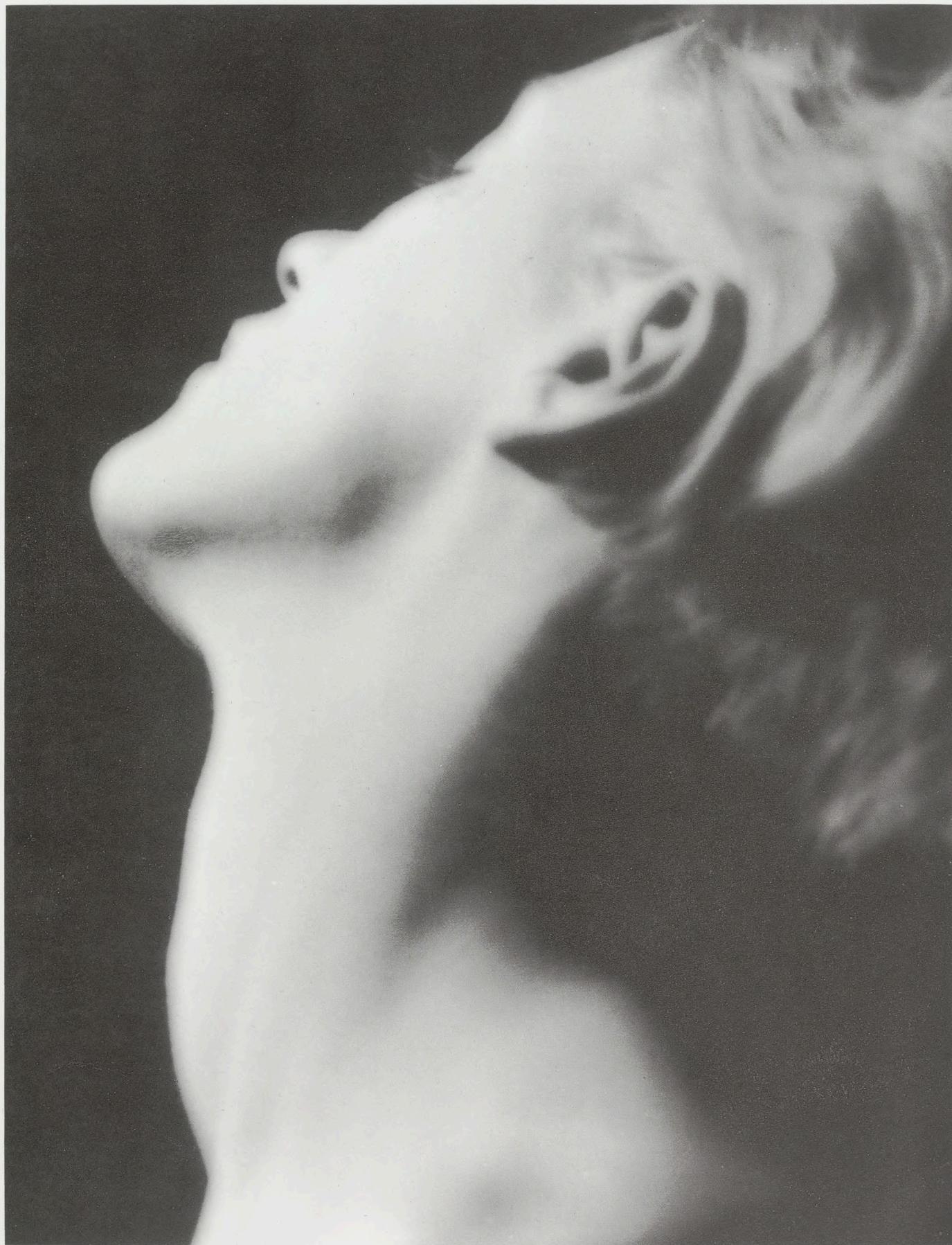


Fig. 120. Man Ray, *Lee Miller*, 1929. Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex, England.

apparently random, often incomprehensible, reinsertion into various books. They survive all these insults. This subspecies of rather plain images from the 1920s, made in the center of the most specific and sophisticated web of cultural cross-indexes, shines out of its original matrix to radiate mysteriously on its own terms.

Man Ray's superb gifts as a portraitist served him in every aspect of the photographic endeavor. Certain of the less conventional portraits particularly force to issue the question of the artist's perception of himself in relation to the truest intentions of surrealism. The famous portrait of the Marquise Casati (1922; figs. 121, 122), that face with doubled or tripled eyes, the entire image doubled again through its existence in both positive and negative prints, shows how Man Ray occasionally subverted or deviated from his characteristically straightforward surrealist-period portraits. The Casati portrait operates on three transparent levels: it is a languidly, casually fashionable portrait; it is a subtly depersonalized or abstracted image; and it is an overtly manipulated or at least technically distorted picture of a woman's face. All these levels work with equal and deliberate force. Yet the artist was to claim in a prominently quoted statement that it was the sitter, not the artist, who insisted upon the validity of what he originally considered a "failed" photograph, one that he would have discarded:

That night when I developed my negatives, they were all blurred. I pushed them aside and considered the sitting a failure. Not hearing from me, [the Marquise] phoned me some time later; when I informed her that the negatives were worthless, she insisted on seeing some prints, bad as they were. I printed up a couple of which there was a semblance of a face—one with three pairs of eyes. It might have passed for a Surrealist version of the Medusa. She was enchanted with this one—said I had portrayed her soul, and ordered dozens of prints. I wished other sitters were as easy to please.<sup>10</sup>

This passage, removed from the occasion by three decades, reveals—perhaps unintentionally, perhaps not—something of Man Ray's ambivalent perception of himself not only as a portrait artist but, more important, as a surrealist. The full ambivalence, or at least the full measure of its complexity, is intriguingly hinted at here. Something about the statement is disingenuous. One does not finally believe that the Marquise Casati prevailed upon the artist to retrieve from oblivion what he considered an unsatisfactory photograph—a work destined to become, by sheerest vagary, one of his best and best-

known. Man Ray himself acknowledges the presence of irony in his perception of surrealism when he says, "It might have passed for a Surrealist version of the Medusa." Although he undoubtedly prided himself on his power to make portraits that pleased both the subject and himself, he certainly did not imagine that he functioned purely as the sitter's servant, even as early as 1922, when this photograph was made. (Of course, by the time he made the statement quoted, he enjoyed the distance from having made the particular portrait as well as from his subsequent flowering that allowed room for subtle revision and self-parody, the kind of unembarrassed nostalgia that all artists are allowed—in the eventuality of their survival.)

Some of Man Ray's most celebrated surrealist photographs prove, on reflection, to be among his least successful. The more overtly symbolic or theatrical, the less enduring is his imagery. An example is another female head that exists in both positive and negative versions, the famous double image of Kiki with the African mask, *Black and White (Noire et blanche)*, 1926; figs. 123, 124), published in *Variétés*, July 1928. This pair of images lacks the mystery and humor of the Marquise Casati portrait. It is as much a surrealist contrivance as it is a portrait or still life, and it contains layered references to many of the underlying concerns the artist brought to his meditations on the female body as an object. Yet it lacks the sense of the body in its potential for intrinsic strangeness. The posing of Kiki's head, cheek laid horizontally on a flat surface, eyes closed, creates not the illusion but an analogue of the head as a disembodied object, like a decorated egg or a sculpture. Kiki's head casts a shadow, obviously achieved by carefully lighting the scene, that works in relation to the shadow cast by the adjacent upright sculpted head. The two perpendicular bodies, one living, the other crafted, are meant to play against one another both formally and psychologically. Man Ray was probably more interested in the binary play between the two heads as sculptural counterparts, flesh and ebony, life and art, than he was in the cultural ramifications of "black" and "white," Caucasian and Negroid, though this interplay cannot have escaped him either. Reversing the black/white binarism through negative printing, which introduces a version of the image in which Kiki's whitest flesh is rendered electrically dark and the African wood mask eerily bright, reinforces the formal as well as the anthropological tension. This tension is achieved not by simple virtue of exchange, but by its nature as a *technique*, a playfully parlayed act of the demonstrably willful artist.

This famous work was preceded by another image of

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Fig. 121. Man Ray, *La Marquise Cassati*. 1922. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

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Fig. 122. Man Ray, *La Marquise Cassati*. 1922. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



Fig. 123. Man Ray, *Black and White (Noire et blanche)*, 1926. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

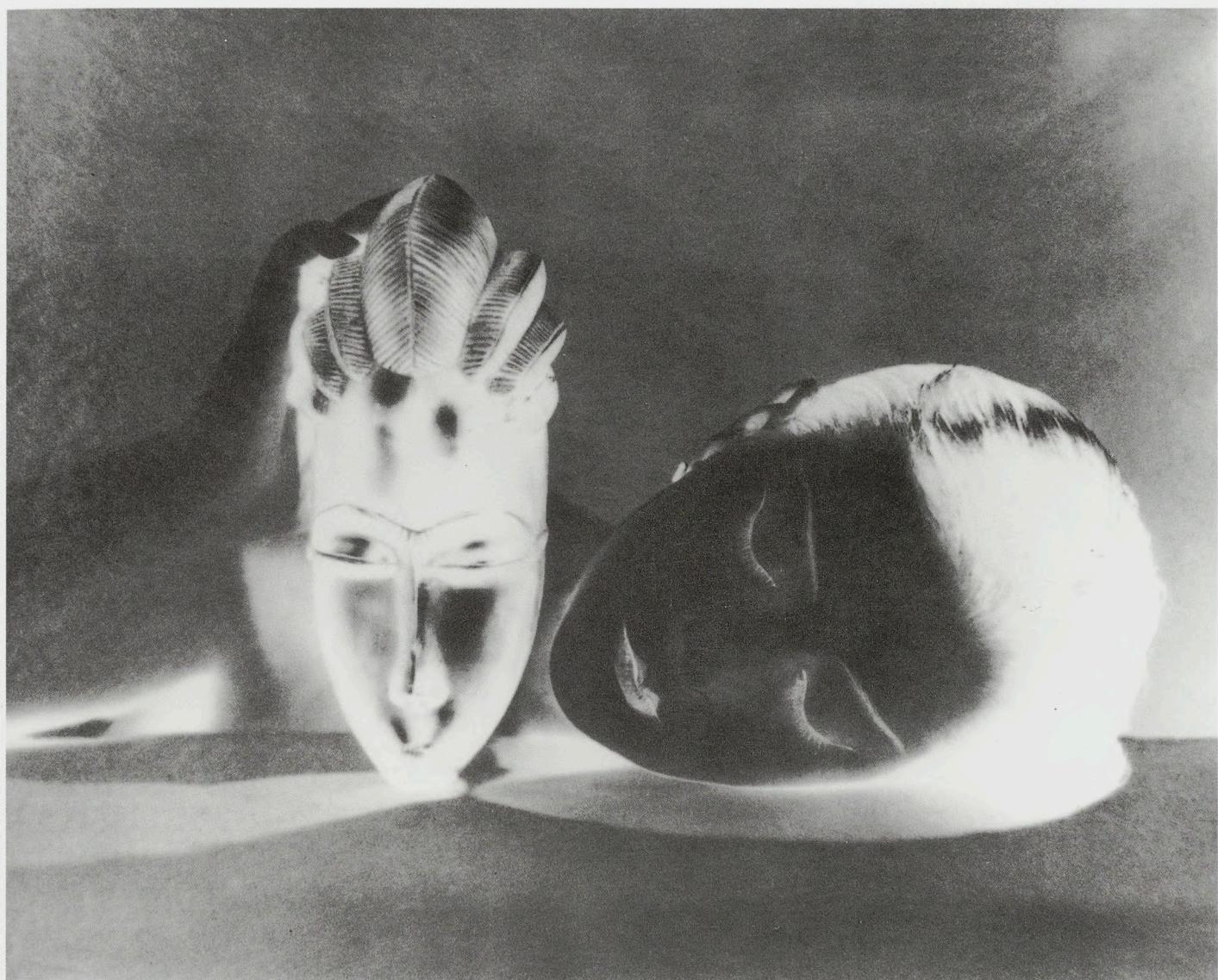


Fig. 124. Man Ray, *Black and White (Noire et blanche)*, 1926. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.  
pages 140–141; Fig. 125. Man Ray, *Kiki de Montparnasse*, 1924. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.





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Figs. 126–128. Man Ray, *Untitled*, c. 1929. Private collection, London.

Kiki's head, made in 1924 (fig. 125). Organized by multiple exposures into a sort of centrifugally swirling composition, this photograph juxtaposes parts of the face in a circular pattern around a centered version of the model's face. First the left half, then the inverted forehead, then the bottom part of Kiki's face encircle the centered frontal image. The work is not among the most successful of the artist's photographs, either as a portrait or as a surrealist document. It has nothing of the mystery and power of the untitled chair and hands image similarly created with the use of multiple exposures. Nor has it the metaphorical power, the multiform resonance, of *Tomorrow* (fig. 131), that photograph showing the full figure of the nude model, arms encircling the head, exposures superimposed so that the illusion is of a simultaneously wide-chested and wide-hipped hour-glass figure. Nevertheless, it is perhaps more arresting than the much more worked and self-consciously major *Black and White*. In the 1924 image, we are shown the body being transformed into a different version of itself, not into a different body. The idea of metamorphosis occurs not as the typically surrealist metamorphosis of one object or creature into another, but of the body echoing itself, turning in upon itself, making of the entity a multiple yet unfractured whole. This distinction, between simple metamorphosis and self-evolution, is the critical point that separates Man Ray's photographic surrealism from that of many other artists. His resistance to that resounding sense of bifurcation, the nagging dissonances and paranoiac edginess that give so many surrealist artists their artistic and philosophic fodder, the foreignness to Man Ray of these pervasive qualities finally enabled him to inhabit the catalytic, if atypical, position he came to occupy.

Man Ray had a greater disposition to serial than to simultaneous discontinuities of image and meaning. For example, his best surrealist film, *Emak Bakia* (1926), appears in its apparently random or autonarrative approach to image-juxtapositions to hew closely to the surrealist line—if by that we mean an evocation of unconscious or dream-derived experience created through the alogical flow of events and objects.<sup>11</sup> Yet even in this kinetic photographic piece, which certainly expresses a sense of fragmentary, poetically analogical structure, the artist generally concentrates in any given segment on unexpectedly unitary and literally comprehensible images that make up subepisodic scenes. The famous passage in *Emak Bakia*, in which a wide-open eye closes to reveal another open eye painted on the eyelid, is the perfect cinematic counterpart to the greatest of his surrealist still photographs. In the film, because the artist has temporal extension at his disposal, he can allow the

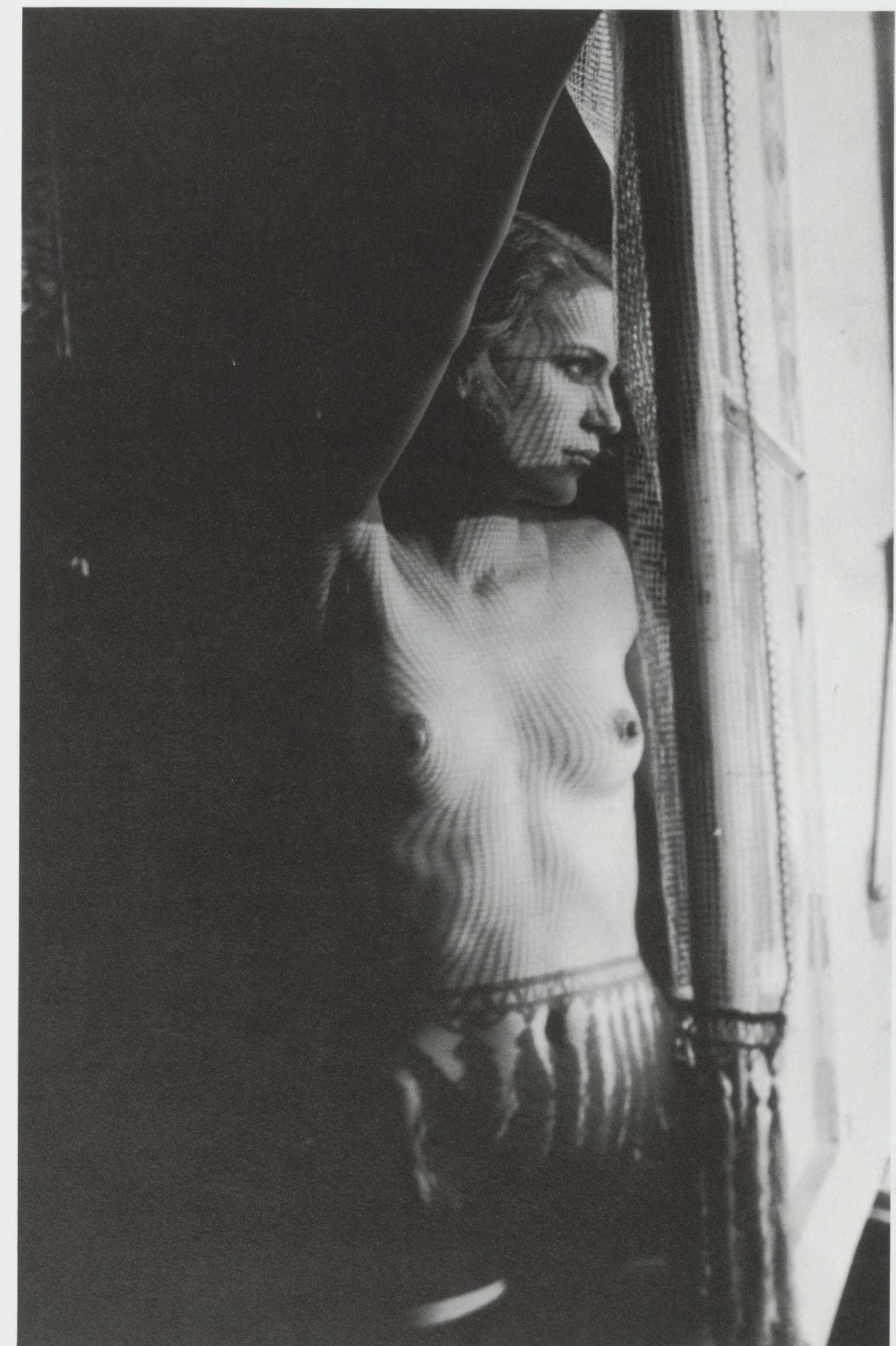
image—significantly, an image of a body part—to metamorphose in time. But the iconic object here does not metamorphose in the characteristic surrealist mode, where the object becomes another unlike object. In the *Emak Bakia* passage, the eye is made to become a version of itself.

Quite a different sort of serial or at least connected but essentially discrete interplay of images emerges in a set of three photographs taken of Lee Miller (fig. 126). This work is virtually unknown, except for one of its parts depicting the model's nude torso frontally and with dappled reflections above a low-slung girdled waist. On seeing the three versions together, as a triptych, we discover in Man Ray a concern not for reembodiments, but for simple redepictions of one figure. Here it is by means of props and a pose that the body achieves transformation—albeit the props, a lace curtain, the shadow of a wrought-iron grille, and pose, the cool upraising of an arm, are so elegant, so nongestural, as to seem entirely unorchestrated. Their distinctively unironic and demurely unadulterated nature would seem to disqualify them from either the post-dada or the surrealist rubric. Yet they are of the period and spirit of French surrealism in the same way Brassaï's illustrations for *Nadja* are. The working of variations on a single image here recalls another recently discovered group of Man Ray images, photos of Lee Miller, Kiki, perhaps other models, pieced together, scrapbook-fashion, in an arresting sequence that hints, as perhaps no other document does, at the artist's consciousness of the potential multivalence inherent in the idea of transforming the single body into versions of itself. It is an idea he usually executed in the dual images of, say, *Black and White* rather than in the multiple images of the scrapbook.<sup>12</sup>

The body and the body as its own object of embrace are counterpoised, mirrored, and conceptually fused in a photograph so graceful, so coolly lyric, as to be almost a reflexive comment on neoclassical beauty. The untitled two nudes (fig. 129) represents the model (Nusch Eluard?) and an alabasterlike sculptural torso. In a frozen yet fluid gesture, the nude model bends over the prostrate one, which awaits but is lifeless, forming an identity at first ambiguous. Man Ray's reference in this work to other art, to traditions ranging from Canova to Stieglitz, proclaims itself so assertively as to remove the piece at once from the rest of his photographic oeuvre. Whereas in nearly every one of his other nude photographs the artist willingly succumbs to the model's individual corporeal presence, here the model and her alter persona inhabit the world of art, of generalization, of psychological metaphor. Because of the white tonalities—the optical



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Kiki's head, made in 1924 (fig. 125). Organized by multiple exposures into a sort of centrifugally swirling composition, this photograph juxtaposes parts of the face in a circular pattern around a centered version of the model's face. First the left half, then the inverted forehead, then the bottom part of Kiki's face encircle the centered frontal image. The work is not among the most successful of the artist's photographs, either as a portrait or as a surrealist document. It has nothing of the mystery and power of the untitled chair and hands image similarly created with the use of multiple exposures. Nor has it the metaphorical power, the multiform resonance, of *Tomorrow* (fig. 131), that photograph showing the full figure of the nude model, arms encircling the head, exposures superimposed so that the illusion is of a simultaneously wide-chested and wide-hipped hour-glass figure. Nevertheless, it is perhaps more arresting than the much more worked and self-consciously major *Black and White*. In the 1924 image, we are shown the body being transformed into a different version of itself, not into a different body. The idea of metamorphosis occurs not as the typically surrealist metamorphosis of one object or creature into another, but of the body echoing itself, turning in upon itself, making of the entity a multiple yet unfractured whole. This distinction, between simple metamorphosis and self-evolution, is the critical point that separates Man Ray's photographic surrealism from that of many other artists. His resistance to that resounding sense of bifurcation, the nagging dissonances and paranoiac edginess that give so many surrealist artists their artistic and philosophic fodder, the foreignness to Man Ray of these pervasive qualities finally enabled him to inhabit the catalytic, if atypical, position he came to occupy.

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Fig. 129. Man Ray, *Untitled*, c. 1936. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 129. Man Ray, *Untitled*, c. 1936. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

ambiguity created by the white figure's placement on a white sheet—the sculptured torso seems at first glance a living model. Only after rather careful scrutiny does one see that not only is the prostrate figure not a human model, but her legs are truncated at mid thigh.

The strange little shock of discovering the inanimate nature of one of these eroticized figures is like the perceptual disequilibrium excited by the inexplicable physical rupturedness of the 229 boulevard Raspail image. In this as well as the two nudes photograph, the dislocation between what is expected of ordinary observed phenomena and what is actually shown derives from qualities perfectly integral to the thing photographed. The surrealist understanding, that what we fantasize and what we experience are interwoven not just in imagination but in everyday cognitive reality, finds its highest expression in these works.

In his great photographs of the 1920s and 1930s, Man Ray succeeded in eroticizing his objects, creating enduring poetic incarnations of surrealism's Sadist desire without violating his own classically grounded modernist aestheticism. This is tantamount to the artist's having invented, from *inside* the workings of a highly program-

matic and most often pungently atmospheric style, a subtle antidote to that style's latent excesses. He forged a tenaciously subversive—because nonsensational and nonmanipulative—style within a style. From within the innermost circles of surrealism, Man Ray became the movement's most effective, although unacknowledged, critic. He could subvert for his own expression Breton's seemingly irreducible equation between new consciousness on the one hand and cultivated absurdities by means of logical dislocation on the other hand. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Man Ray operated on Steiglitzian principles of modernist formal integrity, eschewing inorganic metaphor. His strength was in his allegiance to the artwork as a self-defining and self-justifying entity. That he maintained this allegiance often in the name of freeing the artwork from any academicism and in the cause of proclaiming a properly surrealist uprootedness, does not thrust him squarely into the surrealist camp. But that he remained finally tangent to the movement fails to diminish the irrefutable importance of Man Ray's presence among the surrealists, and especially his photographic contributions to their various manifestations.

1. Arturo Schwarz, *Man Ray* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1977), p. 33.

2. Schwarz, p. 16.

3. Schwarz, p. 25.

4. Schwarz, p. 57.

5. Schwarz, p. 286.

6. We have deliberately excluded from our selection a large portion of Man Ray's surrealist-period photographic work. The more obvious omissions are the portraits; these are among the artist's most famous works, and the portraits of his fellow surrealists are perhaps the most familiar and often the most successful. But, by definition, the straight portraits (even if his head shots were seldom absolutely "straight" by most standards) are simply not "surrealist photographs" in any stylistically defensible way. They are the result of formal sittings and, as such, are both traditionally grounded and explicitly documentary works. For all that Man Ray's photographic portraits are often as great as any of their era, they remain an expression of the artist's most classical and conventional modality.

The relatively large body of rayographs, works executed by direct interaction of light and chemicals without a camera—a process discovered by accident when Man Ray developed a batch of fashion

photographs—are represented here by proportionally few images. Nor have we included a substantial number of solarizations (a technique in which the photographic positive is exposed to light during the printing process, producing modified inversions of tonality), although this device figures importantly in some of the studies of the body. The other technically manipulated images, those employing negative printing or multiple exposures, are represented here, but not in systematic depth.

7. Dawn Ades, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), p. 259.

8. Ades, p. 260.

9. The building at 229 boulevard Raspail stands today; its facade is, in fact, extended at one side with the peculiarly serrated section of wall that appears in Man Ray's photo. The effect is not a result of photographic retouching.

10. Jean Hubert Martin, *Man Ray Photographs* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1982), p. 209; Schwartz, pp. 283–84.

11. See Edward A. Aiken, "'Emak Bakia' Reconsidered," *Art Journal* 43 (1983): 240–46.

12. Arturo Schwarz, Catalogue, Museo Contemporaneo (Milan: by the museum, 1984).

L'AMOUR FOU

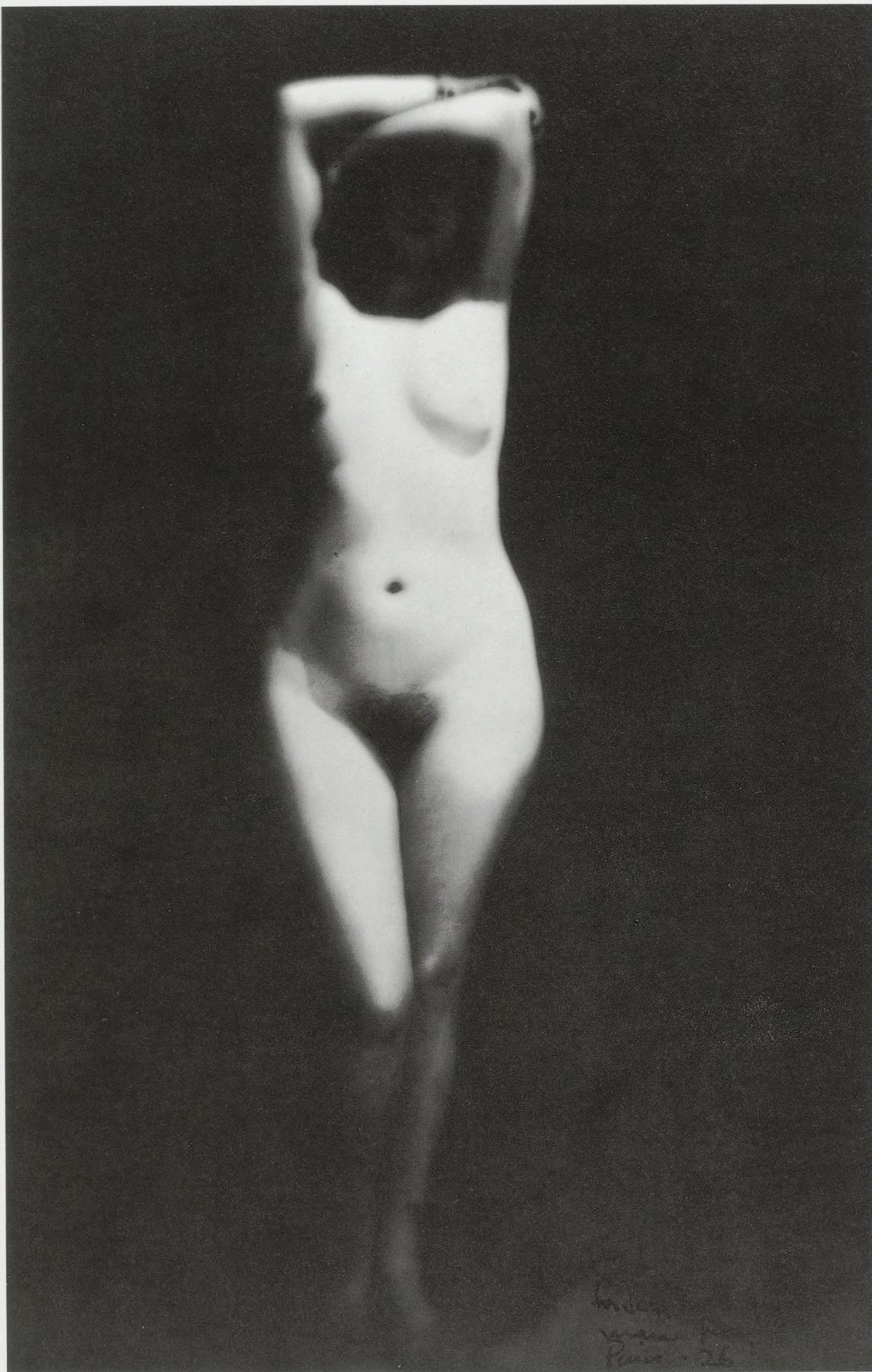


Fig. 130. Man Ray, *Untitled*, c. 1923. Collection Roger Therond, Paris.

MAN RAY AND SURREALIST PHOTOGRAPHY

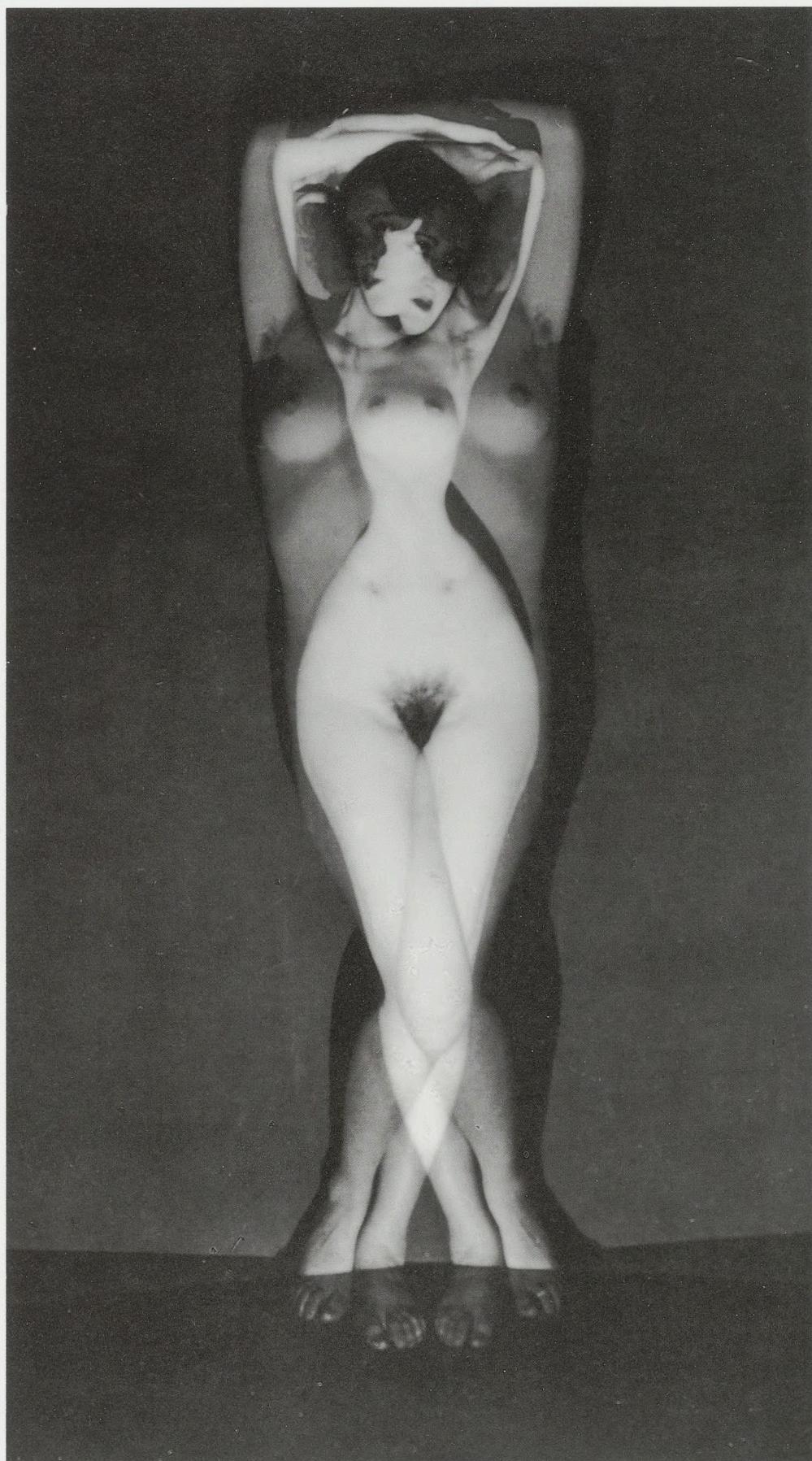


Fig. 131. Man Ray, *Tomorrow (Demain)*, 1924. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 132. Man Ray, *Prayer (La Prière)*, 1930. Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex, England.

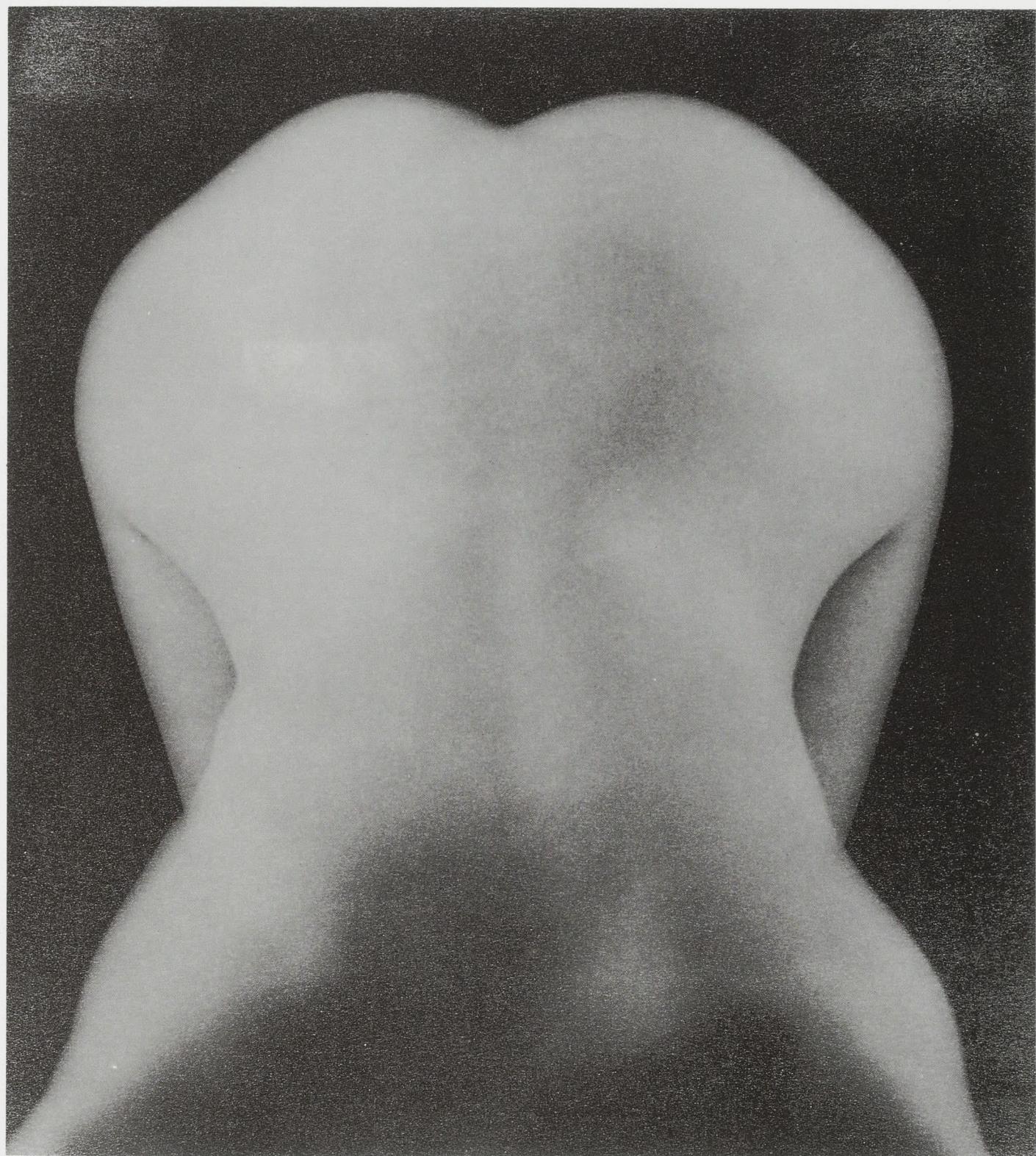


Fig. 133. Lee Miller, *Nude*, c. 1934. Art Institute of Chicago, Julien Levy Collection.

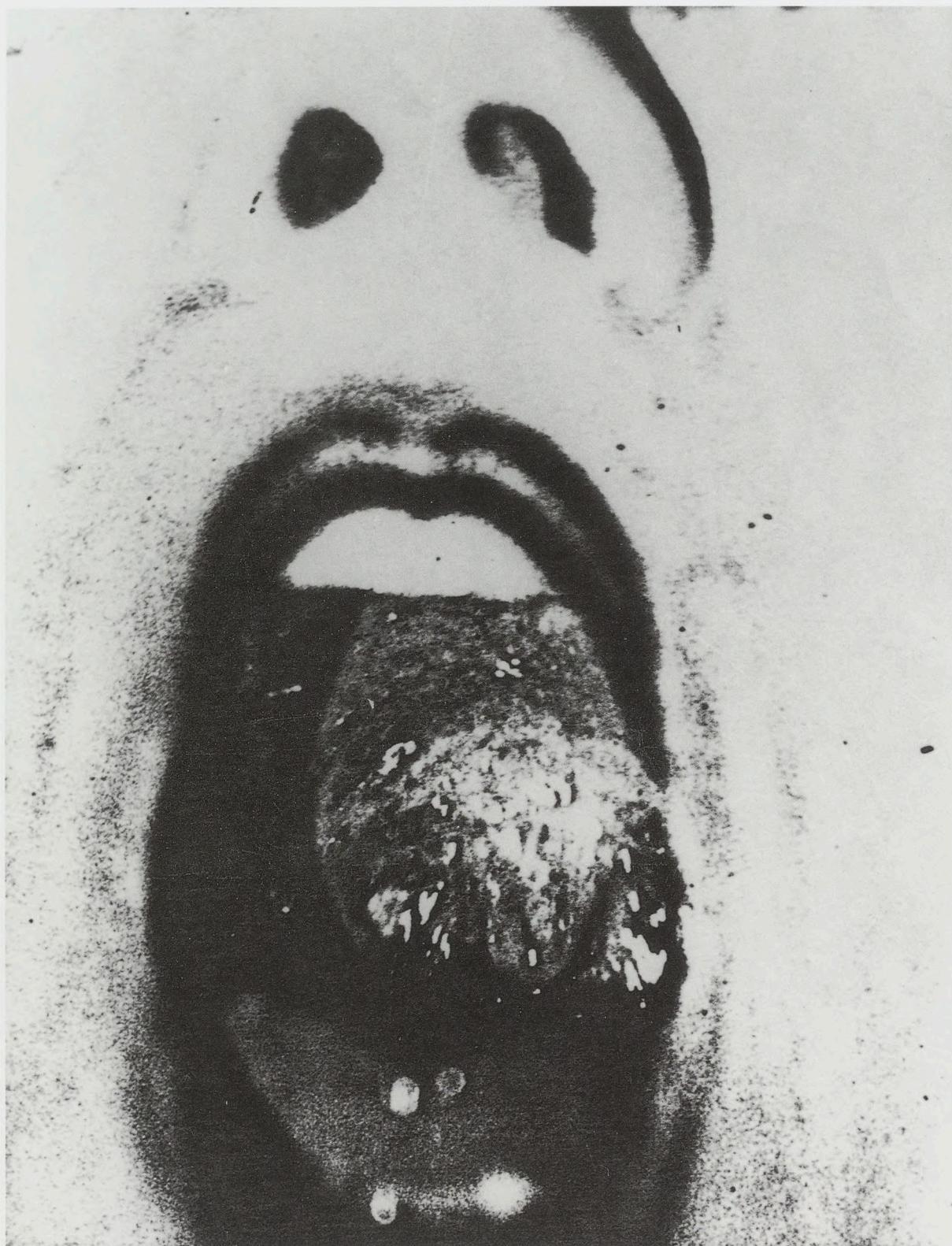


Fig. 134. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1930. Published in *Documents*.



# *Photography and the Surrealist Text*

Dawn Ades

L'AMOUR FOU

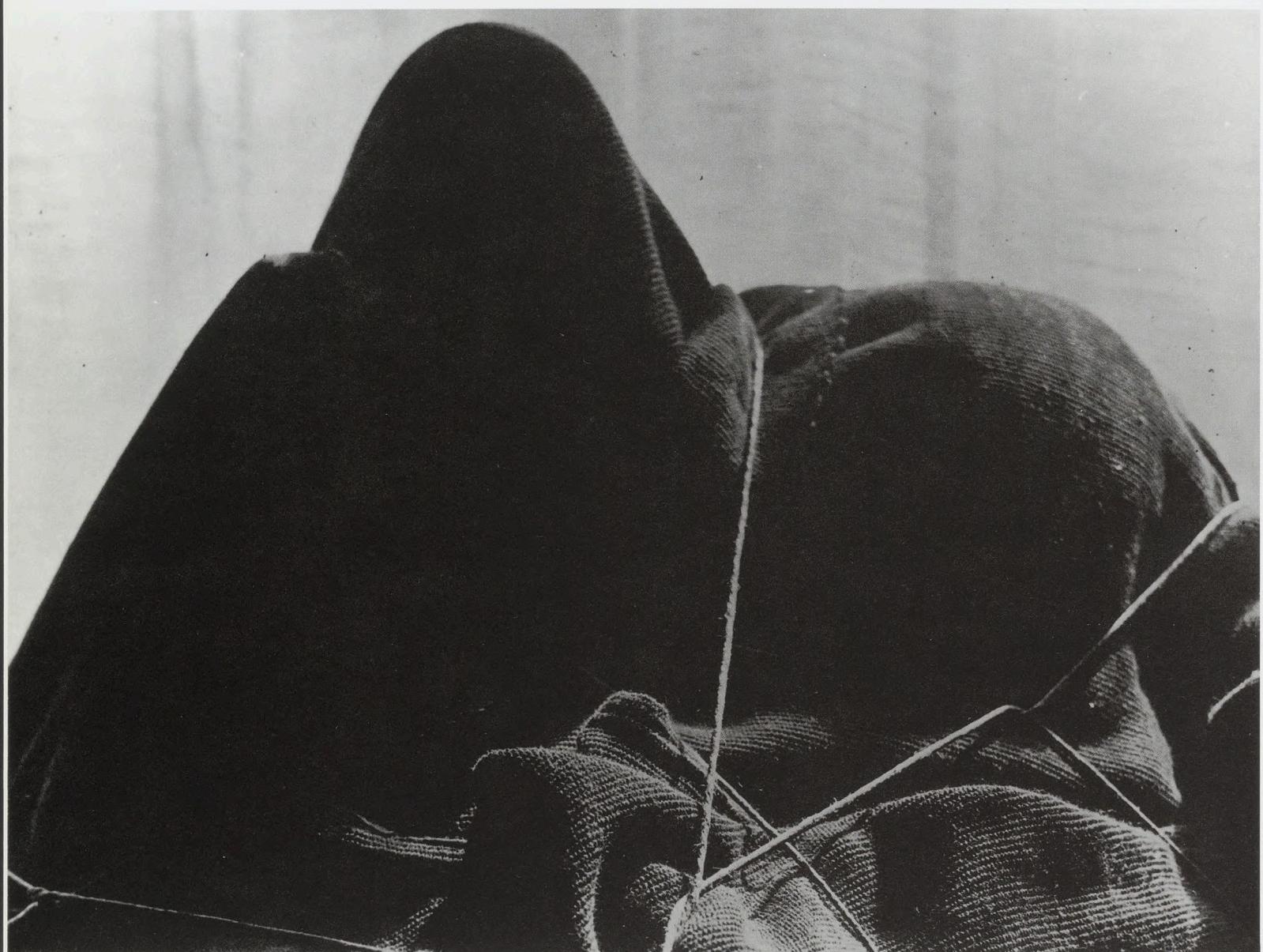


Fig. 135. Man Ray, *The Enigma of Isador Ducasse*, 1920. Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan.

Whatever may subsequently have been made of it, surrealism did not primarily seek to establish itself as a movement within the history of twentieth-century art and literature. Instead, it worked for a revolution in our modes of thought and in our consciousness of ourselves and the things around us. Not as an adjunct to their activity, but as an integral part of it, the surrealists probed other areas that bore closely on their central concern for effecting a change in consciousness: psychology, philosophy, ethnology, anthropology, sociology.

If there is any *site* where surrealist activity, the life of the movement in its fullest sense, is to be found, it is the surrealist periodicals—not as a monolithic expression of surrealism, but as a terrain of debate, of creation, and criticism. It is also in the periodicals that the range and resources of photography within surrealism are most fully realized. These magazines—*La Révolution surréaliste* (1924–29), *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (1930–33), and *Minotaure* (1933–39), together with the review *Documents* (1929–30), where the renegade surrealist photographer Jacques-André Boiffard took refuge—and certain surrealist books like André Breton's *Nadja*, *Les Vases communicants*, and *L'Amour fou*, which make special use of photographs, will form the basis of this study. This is not, of course, a definitive list. Other reviews, like the Belgian *Variétés*, the *London Bulletin*, the wartime *VVV* published in New York, the postwar *Brief* or *Le Surréalisme même*, or publications like the exhibition catalogue *First Papers of Surrealism*, were quite distinctive in their choice and presentation of photographs within a more or less surrealist context. However, limited though it is, the group of productions I will discuss, geographically homogeneous and covering the first fifteen years of surrealist activity, enables us

to examine a particular intellectual and aesthetic trajectory in terms of photography and its interconnections with surrealist theory and practice.

What kind of photographs were included in the magazines? Where and how were they reproduced? What is their relationship to a given text? These are questions that need to be asked to determine the status of and interest in photography at a given time. In these magazines and books, for example, the documentary character of photography is both displayed and challenged—to its own enrichment. Its claim to be the realist medium par excellence is investigated as part of surrealism's questioning of reality and of what "is vulgarly understood by the real."<sup>1</sup>

The photographs in the magazines are by no means all made by the surrealists themselves or by photographers the surrealists adopted. Many are anonymous or found by chance, like the other oddments and objects that so fascinated the surrealists, garnered from their hunting grounds in the street, junk shops and markets, popular and scientific magazines, and elsewhere.

The photographs in *La Révolution surréaliste* are various, often casual and allusive, their interest pointed up by a hinted juxtaposition with a text or sometimes left to stand entirely in their own right. Later, in *Minotaure* especially, where high quality of printed reproduction is most fully and luxuriously exploited, there is a notable increase in the number of photographs of all kinds. This coincided with the period when the object, found or constructed from ready-made materials, was exerting its hold on surrealism. What connections there may be between the photograph and the found object will be considered below, as well as certain texts in which the object was first posited and then explored; for



Fig. 136. Man Ray, *The Surrealist "Centrale,"* 1924. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

the interest of each relates to that “essential point—namely, the value which should be accorded reality (the aforesaid value being capable of varying from 0 to infinity),” as Breton wrote in the “Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality.”<sup>2</sup>

In *La Révolution surréaliste*, the first of the surrealist reviews, initially edited by Pierre Naville and Benjamin Péret, the following different kinds of photographs were included:

- Photographs of objects (which often, like Man Ray’s *Enigma of Isidor Ducasse* [fig. 135], a sewing machine wrapped and tied and rendered unrecognizable—featured on the first page of *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 1—were constructed for the express purpose of being photographed)
- Straight photographs (street scenes, portraits, etc.)

- Manipulated photographs (double exposures, double printings, rayographs, photomontages)
- Film stills
- Documentary photographs, such as ethnographic work or photographs from Jean-Martin Charcot’s archives on hysteria at the Salpêtrière Hospital
- Popular images (such as picture postcards)

The “popular images” can perhaps be placed in three general groupings: fantastic photographs; photographs as documents; and photographic “faits divers,” visual equivalents of brief newspaper reports on such “everyday” events as suicide. Such photographs bear witness to an eruption of the irrational or uncontrollable forces in “ordinary” life.

*La Révolution surréaliste* was modeled on the popular scientific journal, *La Nature*, which featured a photograph

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE SURREALIST TEXT



Fig. 137. Germaine Berton and members of the Surrealist group, 1924. Published in *La Revolution surréaliste*.

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Fig. 138. Surrealists around a painting by René Magritte, 1929. Published in *La Révolution surréaliste*.

on its cover and as a matter of course used photographs to document and illustrate its articles. Naville chose *La Nature* as his model partly to distance the new review deliberately from other art and literary magazines, but also to suggest a commitment to "research," the gathering of evidence—although it was evidence of a kind meant to subvert or question the "scientific" certainties of a "reign of logic." The contents of the review were also arranged in categories that ironically echo their scientific model: "Dreams," "Surrealist Texts," "Chroniques." In the second issue, "Chroniques" contained the following subdivisions: "General Security," "Death," "Moral Sciences," "Life," and "Sleep."

The photographic illustrations are frequently without caption and sometimes appear anonymously and without any means of identification or specific connection with a text. In the first issue, for example, a photograph of Germaine Berton, an anarchist who assassinated the extreme right-wing editor of *L'Action Française*, is surrounded by photographs of all the surrealists (fig. 137), but with no identification or explanation other than a quotation from Baudelaire: "Woman is the being who throws the greatest shadow or the greatest light on our dreams." The photograph was not, it seems, so much an *hommage* to the anarchist gesture, as to the fact that the gesture had been made by a woman, and that shortly after it had been made, the son of the *Action Française* editor committed suicide for love of her.<sup>3</sup> Symmetrically, in the final issue, a new series of photographs of the surrealists, their eyes closed, surround a painting by Magritte (fig. 138). These and other photographs are not presented as "illustration," but as images in their own right.

Photographs were not always reproduced without captions, the addition of which was sometimes used to alter the signification of an image: a scarecrow is turned into a satirical symbol by the caption "Early 20th-century French Art." On the cover of the sixth issue (March 1926), Man Ray's dada photograph, *Moving Sculpture* (fig. 111), is titled "France," which immediately transforms the floating white sheets into ghostly shrouds, or into that symbol of patriotic honor, the national flag—but drooping, multiplied, and erased.

It is notable that the first few issues of *La Révolution surréaliste* have a more or less equal balance between photographs and other kinds of illustrations and that not a single painting was reproduced in the first issue. This must be seen in the particular context of contemporary debate about the role of the fine arts within surrealism. Although the surrealists undertook no systematic theoretical investigation of photography, it was nonetheless

the case that photography played a certain role in this debate. Early in surrealism, skepticism was expressed about what claims painting could ever make to be "surrealist"; painting was too deliberate, too difficult, too *learned* and skill-dependent an activity ever to take its place as a procedure equivalent to automatic writing. Just what a *plastique surréaliste* might be is considered by Max Morise in the first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*. It cannot, he asserts, lie in the route offered by the dream paintings of de Chirico, for attempts to recapture a dream image are too subject to distortion and the tricks of memory. He argues instead for the "chance" lines of the automatic drawing, produced while in that "waking dream" characteristic of the surrealist state (the "mark of a crayon is the equivalent of a word"), for the rudimentary pictures of the "fugitive visions" of madmen or mediums, and finally—but so tentatively that he does not even name the process—for the photography of Man Ray, cameraless and otherwise.

What is reproduced in this issue—and there is not a single painting—is intended to back up Morise's argument. There are automatic drawings by Masson, free flowing and calligraphic, of the kind that was most easily acceptable as automatic and that was to take a preponderant place in the third issue; there also were drawings by Ernst, Naville, and Desnos, which are more like rudimentary sketches of "fugitive visions," images that pre-exist the process of drawing. At least one of these looks as if it belonged to the period of experiments with "*sommeils*," hypnotic trances. There are also a number of photographs by Man Ray; two are of objects, the others demonstrate to a greater or lesser degree delicate manipulation or the operations of chance. None is a photomontage, yet all "render inefficient"<sup>4</sup> the medium as a record of simple external reality. Even if they do not claim to be automatic, in that automatism was meant as a route to the inner psyche, they are nonetheless clearly offered as a true visual surrealism. It seems, in fact, that the rigid visual distinction between automatism and the dream was not yet in force at this point. The very broad understanding of "dream" and the "dream state" in Breton's 1922 text, "Mediums' Entrance," where he defined surrealism as "a certain psychic automatism that corresponds quite closely to the state of dreaming, a state that today is very difficult to delimit," still held sway.<sup>5</sup> Photographic images, too, could "correspond" to images experienced in a dream state and, as such, could still be seen as related to automatism, and as not subject to the same objections as dream paintings. Among these images are a double pair of breasts (fig. 20), a "spirit" photograph—a double exposure with disembodied arms

hovering ghostly on a chair (fig. 117)—and a nude torso, half obscured by shadow, a window casting black stripes along the contours of the flesh (fig. 67). The latter is placed without comment among the “dream narratives.” It, too, is an image belonging to night and dreams and illustrates the promise of the preface in this first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, to disturb our familiar modes and habits, our familiar categories: “fashion will be treated according to the gravitation of white letters on nocturnal flesh.”<sup>6</sup>

A strong case was being made, then, mostly by the illustrations themselves, for photography as a major ingredient within a “*plastique surréaliste*.” But in the third issue, Pierre Naville launched a radical attack upon the surrealist claims to a visual aesthetic and implicated photography on his side in a challenge to the “*plastique surréaliste*.” In his text, ironically entitled “Beaux Arts,” Naville denied that either painting or drawing could ever be a true surrealist activity and proposed instead modes of visual *experience* rather than visual *expression*:

Everyone knows that there is no *surrealist painting* . . . but there are *spectacles*. Memory and the pleasure of looking: that is the whole aesthetic. . . . The cinema, not because it is life, but the marvelous, the agency of chance elements.

The street, kiosks, automobiles, screaming doors, lamps bursting in the sky.

Photographs: Eusebius, L'Etoile, Le Matin, Excelsior, La Nature—the smallest ampoule in the world, route followed by a murderer. The circulation of blood in the thickness of a membrane.<sup>7</sup>

This threat to the activity of painting within surrealism was among the factors that determined Breton to take over editorial control of the review; in the next issue, number 4 (July 1925), he began his series of articles titled “Surrealism and Painting,” and the number of paintings in the review dramatically increased, although not to the exclusion of photographs, which included works by Atget and Man Ray.

The first article asserts that the “need to fix visual images” has led to the formation of a real language, “no more artificial than any other.” Breton’s interest is centered upon painting but does not exclude photography in so far as it is a medium surrealist artists have used (Max Ernst and Man Ray). Previously, in his preface to the catalogue for the Paris exhibition of Max Ernst’s collages (1921), Breton had written: “The invention of photography has dealt a mortal blow to the old modes of expression, in painting as well as in poetry.”<sup>8</sup> Breton went on to describe the camera’s contribution to the

destruction of our belief in absolute space and time, instancing, in a passage prophetic of Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), the use of fast- and slow-motion cameras. Soon “the expression ‘as far as the eye can see’ will seem to us devoid of meaning.” But in “Surrealism and Painting,” and partly in reaction to Naville’s challenge, his concern is not with the nature of photography’s threat but with the new modes of expression in painting. He treads a difficult path here, because he does not want to seem to champion a return to a traditional aesthetic and is sometimes driven, in this ambiguous and even contradictory text, into an aggressive attitude to painting as medium—“a lamentable expedient!”

The old question of whether or not photography is an art does not interest Breton. But, in discussing Man Ray in the third installment of “Surrealism and Painting,” he does briefly face the question of the relative claims of painting and photography in a surrealist context. Man Ray “has applied himself vigorously to the task of stripping it [photography] of its positive nature, of forcing it to abandon its arrogant air and pretentious claims”—pretentious for its claim to reproduce external reality “faithfully”:

The photographic print, considered in isolation, is certainly permeated with an emotive value that makes it a supremely precious article of exchange (and when will all the books that are worth anything stop being illustrated with drawings and appear only with photographs?); nevertheless, despite the fact that it is endowed with a special power of suggestion, it is not in the final analysis the *faithful* image that we aim to retain of something that will soon be gone forever.<sup>9</sup>

There is, then, a limit to its claim to reproduce external reality “faithfully,” because it cannot, for instance, take account of the totality of even a momentary experience. Man Ray’s accomplishment was not only to challenge this claim, but also to “guide it towards other ends than those for which it appears to have been created—in particular, the thorough exploration on its own behalf, within the limits of its resources, of that region which painting imagined it was going to be able to keep all to itself.” The point I would like to pick up here is not the argument concerning Man Ray’s extension of photography into the realms of chance, transformation, and metamorphosis, but the comment made by Breton, in parenthesis, concerning the illustration of books with photographs. This apparently passing suggestion was to introduce a new value for photography within surrealism in terms

of its possible collaboration with the text, among other things.

Breton must have written this aside while he was brooding over the problem of *Nadja* and the possibility of illustrating it. He had written the book during the summer of 1927 at Varengeville-sur-mer in Normandy and published it the following year. Why did Breton decide to use photographs for *Nadja* and, later, for *Les Vases communicants* and *L'Amour fou*? The answer has nothing to do with an elevation of the aesthetic status of photography within surrealism, nor with photography's potential imaginative capacity. On the contrary, it was photography as record and verification that Breton had in mind for these books, and this must be explained by pausing for a moment to consider what the books actually are. In 1929, shortly after the appearance of *Nadja*, and clearly with this and Louis Aragon's *Paris Peasant* (1926) primarily in mind, Walter Benjamin wrote, in "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," that "anyone who has perceived that the writings of this circle are not literature but something else—demonstrations, watchwords, documents, bluffs, forgeries if you will, but at any rate not literature—will also know for the same reasons, that the writings are concerned literally with experiences, not with theories and still less with phantasms."<sup>10</sup>

*Nadja* is not fiction; it is a series of heterogeneous fragments and anecdotes with, at its center, the record of an encounter and subsequent relationship with a woman calling herself *Nadja* "because it is the beginning of the Russian word for hope, and only the beginning."<sup>11</sup> *Nadja* is the record of an experience that just failed, on Breton's part at least, to be "*l'amour fou*"—the love that transforms life and gives it meaning, and that Breton was later to celebrate in "La Nuit du tournesol." In the end, Breton was touched most closely not by *Nadja* herself but by the things that moved her: by the inexplicable and unexpected events that her presence in the streets of Paris provoked, which Breton experiences as the marvelous. It is a true story, and the problem for Breton was one of convincing the reader of this fact, using several devices to distance his text from that of a novel, including the presentation of pages of a diary, and the adoption of the tone of "medical observation." Perhaps because the diary technique is such a classical novelist's device (and has ironically been responsible for readers assuming that *Nadja* is fiction), Breton later gave greater emphasis to the analogy with clinical reports.

Breton adopted the tone of medical observation as part of the antiliterary imperative governing the making of *Nadja*, mentioning specifically the method of the

neuropsychiatrist (in spite of his savage attack on psychiatrists at the end of the book). Later, in *L'Amour fou*, he again asserted that

on many occasions I have been led to situate, in connection with various intimate circumstances of [my] life, a series of facts that seemed to me to be of a nature to hold the psychological attention because of their unusual character. Only, in fact, precise, absolutely conscientious reference to the emotional state of the subject at the moment when such facts occurred can provide a real basis of appreciation. It is on the model of medical observation that Surrealism has always proposed that the account should be undertaken. Not an incident should be omitted, not a name modified, lest the arbitrary should reappear.<sup>12</sup>

The very irrationality of the events described in *Nadja* necessitated the strict authenticity of a document; the choice of photographs as illustration, therefore, obeys the same need: they could have the value of a fact in a way a drawing never could. (The drawings that are reproduced in *Nadja* are all by the title character herself, and are therefore presented as documents; they do not interpret or illustrate the text.) Yet, the photographs cannot, of course, depict the inexplicable coincidences that occur in the book; they can only record the locations of their occurrence. Nevertheless, these streets, squares, and cafés of Paris are a vital element, emphasizing that the book is not a fictional narrative. Also, by including them, Breton avoided lengthy verbal descriptions, which could never function in the same objective manner as the photographs, and he thereby avoided the vacuity of the literally descriptive nineteenth-century "realist" novels condemned in the first *Manifesto*.

Some of *Nadja*'s photographs were taken especially for the book by another surrealist, Jacques-André Boiffard. Breton dedicated a copy to him thus: "To Jacques-André Boiffard, to whom I owe the most beautiful photographs in this book and through whose eyes I have seen the true sites known by mine . . ."<sup>13</sup> Breton does not say that Boiffard has photographed these sites as they "are," but that through the photographs he recognized them as he himself "knew" them by sight. Yet the quality that has most often been commented upon in them is their banality. Michel Beaujour described *Nadja* as

the narration of an ethnological expedition toward the interior of a singularly disquieting town, a haunted Paris that unveils little by little its sorceries, admits its periodic ritual human sacrifices, proffers its pos-

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Fig. 139. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled* (from *Nadja*), 1928.  
Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



Fig. 140. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled* (from *Nadja*), 1928.  
Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

sessed and its mirages, which the camera has been able to capture and present to us as if we were there. However, what we are shown is nothing: not only have the places defended themselves against the photographer, but those that have allowed themselves to be captured . . . are quite dumb; nothing is suggested in these banal photographs (voluntary banality, no doubt: had he wished to suggest the marvelous of these places, Breton would have gone to Man Ray, who made several portraits of Nadja). These photographs, almost empty of human presence, proceed from a zero-ground of representation: they never move away from the amateur's snapshot or the out-of-date picture postcard . . . their banality is less a result of the photographer's lack of skill than of his will not to inflect the shot, not to make it say more than the eye of the *savant* has taken in.<sup>14</sup>

Although allowing for the fact that their "banality" is Breton's choice, there is still a faintly disparaging tone with regard to Boiffard as a photographer, a suggestion that he could not evoke the marvelous if he tried. In Boiffard's photographs there is clearly an effortless avoidance of picturesque effect, which is in accord with Breton's choice of the medical observation style, and it must be legitimate to suggest that Boiffard, who, like Breton and Aragon, had been a medical student (he took his final examinations in 1924), was in a unique position to understand what Breton had in mind.

The withdrawn or deadpan quality of these photographs, which record where it happened rather than what happened there, at the same time extends and confirms certain central preoccupations of the book. The city itself, to begin with, held a peculiar place in surrealist thought as a location of the marvelous, the chance encounter, the site of the undirected wanderer in a state of total "*disponibilité*," or availability. It was in the street that significant experiences could occur, and certain places seemed to be endowed with more potency than others, though this had nothing to do with any manifest picturesque quality such places might possess. There was a positive preference indeed for the boulevards and hidden quarters of Paris, which can be traced back at least to the legendarily unsuccessful dada excursions to such under-visited sites as Saint Julian Le Pauvre. What Breton found astonishing about Nadja was the completeness of her surrender to the streets and what they might hold for her: she was "the creature always inspired and inspiring, who only loved being in the street—her sole field of worthwhile experience" (p. 131). The very banality of these sites and the photographs indicates that the "marvelous is within reach" for anyone prepared to take the risk.

What, then, of the absence of people in these photographs—an aspect that certainly causes them to resemble those picture postcards of monuments taken at unearthly hours to minimize human interference? At the risk of overdetermining these images, I think that the avoidance of bustle, of human activity and city life, is deliberate and relates to a preoccupation referred to on the cover of the fourth issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, which bore the photograph of a mannequin ascending a curved staircase. The caption runs: "And War on Work." What was implied here is stated clearly in *Nadja*. When the title character is pushed to explain what she does all day in Paris, she says she sits in second-class Metro compartments among people on their way home from work, trying to surmise from their faces what their jobs are. She ends by commenting, "*Il y a des braves gens . . .*" This provokes a real tirade from Breton: "'No! That's not the question'" (p. 77). People are not interesting because of their occupations; it is not the measure in which they support grinding toil that will raise them to the level of revolt, but consciousness of a different kind of the life within them. The experience of the street has to do with life, but it has not to do with industry, toil, urban animation, or with the *form* of the city. "I hope that the presentation of a series of observations of this order and of what will follow will be of a nature to precipitate a few into the street, having made them aware, if not of the emptiness, at least of the serious insufficiency of all so-called rigorous calculation about themselves, of all actions which demand continuous application, which could be premeditated" (pp. 66–67).

Even where there is obvious potential for disorientation or magical effect, as in the use of reflection, Boiffard avoids it. Compare Boiffard's shop window (fig. 139), with one by Atget. In Boiffard's work, the window reflection of the Palais Royal Gardens does not disturb or render ambiguous our reading of the photograph. By contrast, the Atget is disorienting and promises a kind of magic generated within the image—like the pipe-shop window in Aragon's *Paris Peasant*, which suddenly comes alive. Minimized, too, is any interference on the part of the photographer; there is no emphatic viewpoint, no sudden accident of light or of human presence. Yet there is almost always something, a detail, a sign, that draws the attention, and it is usually this that provides a specific anchor in the text: the signs in the street, for example—"Sign Here," over the entrance to the bookshop of *L'Humanité*, the Communist party newspaper (fig. 140); or "Sphinx Hotel," projected high above the Boulevard Magenta, bringing the eye back from its aimless wandering down the street vista. In the text, Nadja shows

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Fig. 141. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1930.  
Published in *Documents*.



Fig. 142. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1930.  
Published in *Documents*.

Breton this luminous sign and says that it was this name alone that determined her, when she arrived in Paris, to alight and stay at this hotel. In the photograph of the Place Dauphine ("one of the most profoundly retired placed I know, one of the worst *terrains vagues* in Paris") the white tablecloths in the black space under the awning of the cafe across the square hold our attention (fig. 8). It is impossible to tell if anyone is seated in the darkness, but the doubled white cloth at the left suggests a presence. It was at this cafe that Breton and Nadja were served outside, to be more alone; here one of the more incredible coincidences that characterize their encounters took place, and it was here that Nadja seemed to see, in the unpeopled square, crowds of the living and the dead (pp. 92–95).

There are signs, then, in the "dumb" photographs, which may be read if they are taken in conjunction with the text. And yet they can never be fully "interpreted." The photographs convey only parts of the cryptogram in which Nadja's life was hidden. In Aragon's *Paris Peasant*, where the city is deciphered with some irony and with a sharper political edge, three young surrealists go one night on a "miraculous hunt" to the park of the Buttes Chaumont. As they read by the light of matches the inscription on the column there, Aragon describes them as "modern Champollions." In *Nadja*, by contrast, Breton suggests that "life itself asks to be decoded like a cryptogram," but Nadja's life was to remain hidden; for there was, finally, no illumination through love. Such illumination would come later for Breton, as he described it in "La Nuit du tournesol," illustrated through Brassai's photographs of an illuminated night city (fig. 163). *Nadja* tells, rather, of "quest and of failure," and neither book nor photographs attempts to "penetrate the space of grandiose and cloudless mythologies."<sup>15</sup>

By the end of 1928 Boiffard had left Breton and the surrealists in acrimonious circumstances. But he continued for a time as a photographer, before returning to the medical profession to work as a radiologist, and contributed, most notably, to the review *Documents*. A comparison might now be made between the collaboration of text and photograph in *Nadja*, and that between the photographs by Boiffard and the texts by Georges Bataille and other contributors to *Documents* during 1929 and 1930. "Refuge" of a number of ex- and excommunicated surrealists, *Documents*, edited by Bataille—"surrealism's old enemy from within"—offered a serious challenge to the movement, continually accusing it of being "idealist." If Boiffard's photographs in *Nadja* bear witness to a certain "immaterialism,"<sup>16</sup> those for *Documents* support and emphasize a materialism that particularly offended

Bataille's rival, Breton. The photographs that provide the most immediate contrast with *Nadja*, so far as the city as subject is concerned, were taken to accompany an article by Robert Desnos, "Pygmalion and the Sphinx" (*Documents* 2, no. 1 [January 1930]). The text is a short, suggestive, and provocative meditation on monumental sculpture, which, "however idealist its aims, is ruled by the terrestrial laws of matter, and above all by the laws of weight." He draws attention to those statues that, in trying to depict what is least figurable—dust, a balloon lifting in the wind—thereby emphasize their own materiality (fig. 141). The more realistic they try to be, the more ridiculous they appear as statues. Boiffard's photographs of the statues of a car (fig. 142), an aviator, and so on emphasize the paradoxical role of the pedestal, sabotaging the strenuous efforts of the sculptor to make his work as "lifelike" as possible.

Boiffard's first photographs in *Documents* were taken to accompany Bataille's article, "The Big Toe" (1, no. 6 [November 1929]), and from this point photography became, in *Documents*, a major element in its own right. Two photographs of a masculine big toe were reproduced in a dramatic full-page presentation (figs. 143, 144), the most manifestly troubling illustrations yet to appear in this relatively luxurious review. Magnificently exaggerating the photograph's propensity to obscure form through chiaroscuro, they simultaneously present every physical detail, wrinkle, hair, and ill-clipped nail, as if through a magnifying glass. Unlike the interior of the mouth, the big toe is not, Bataille writes, innately monstrous, its "ignominy becoming burlesque only through secondary deformations." These photographs, with the toe isolated from its body and erect rather than horizontal, image forth precisely the "base seduction" Bataille assigns to the classic fetishism of the foot. In thus making the big toe an obsessional element within a disquieting area of human sexuality—a point made more forcibly visually than verbally—Bataille continues his attack on "idealist deceptions" of human activity. The big toe is both the most human part of the body—in that it distinguishes the human body from its nearest relative, that of the anthropoid monkey—and yet also the part of the body that remains most firmly planted in the mud. "Most people," Bataille writes, "can only abandon themselves to their instincts in the poetic dusk."<sup>17</sup> The very nakedness of the big toe, surrounded by blackness and isolated like a fetish, becomes shockingly explicit.

Sometimes a photograph provides the point of departure for a text in *Documents*. In "The Human Form" (1, no. 4 [September 1929]), for example, Bataille argues that photographs of people from an earlier epoch offer

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Fig. 143. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1929. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.



Fig. 144. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1929. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

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Fig. 145. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1929.  
Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



Fig. 146. Anonymous, n.d. Published in *Documents*.

a spectacle of comic distortion in which we can recognize nothing in common with our own "human nature" (fig. 146). He argues that this "absence of a common measure between diverse human entities is in some way an aspect of the general disproportion between man and nature."<sup>18</sup> In Limbour's article, "Aeschylus, the Carnival and the Civilized," the photographs (figs. 145, 178) are presented as a continuation of the text, their "*relation sensible*" with the object compensating for the failure of the texts to express the ideas fully: "whoever wants to draw aesthetic or philosophical conclusions from these pieces of pasteboard need only refer to the accompanying photographs."<sup>19</sup> In "The Modern Spirit and the Play of Transpositions" (2, no. 8 [August 1930]), Bataille considers most of the images created by the greatest modern painters insufficient beside the "infinitely more disquieting images that real desires form or deform."<sup>20</sup> He argues that an insistence on symbolic transpositions has rendered most image-making inconsequential and powerless. Yet, how other than in a rhetorical manner can one treat "the terror caused by death or decay, blood flowing, skeletons, insects that eat us"? Bataille uses as illustration a photograph of the Capuchin mortuary chapel in Rome gracefully decorated with the bones of the monks' predecessors (fig. 149); Boiffard's photograph of flies trapped on flypaper (fig. 150); and photographs especially made for *Documents* by the Institute of Micrography in Paris: enlargements of the eye and wing of a fly magnified respectively twenty-seven and forty-seven times. Even these photographs, Bataille suggests, are of relatively little interest, and he seems also to imply that the photomicrographs are no closer to the "reality" of the insect than Boiffard's grim photograph—although they get as far as scientific investigation can go. Boiffard's photograph of an open mouth (fig. 134) accompanied Bataille's critical dictionary entry for *la bouche* (*Documents* 2, no. 5 [May 1930]: 299). It is not "descriptive" of Bataille's text, which is concerned with how human beings—when they are most moved and, therefore, in a sense most human—concentrate the extremity of their emotion in the mouth, in a great cry, and, in so doing, paradoxically approach the animal. While in the photograph for Bataille's text there is no mediating structure of a head to contain the screaming mouth, in two photographs sent to Bataille's coeditor, Michel Leiris, by the anthropologist William Seabrook, a head is not just masked but completely covered by a black hood, so that in spite of its "ecstatic" or passionate pose there are no human features visible (figs. 176, 177). The zone of discrimination between man and animal—the definition

of what it is to be human—is thus questioned in a manner parallel to Bataille's frequently invoked paradigms of human/inhuman and noble/base.

Especially revealing of the relationship between photograph and text in surrealism generally, and also of the more particular relationship between the photographs and Bataille's ideas, is the series of images that accompanies Bataille's dictionary entry for *abattoir* (*Documents* 2, no. 6 [June 1929]: 329). The text is relatively brief and is accompanied by three photographs by Eli Lotar, who was for a time Buñuel's cameraman and a friend of Boiffard. It is possible that these photographs, taken on a visit to the slaughterhouses at La Villette in the company of André Masson (who was interested in the theme of sacrifice that also concerned Bataille), instigated Bataille's text. Certainly they reveal aspects of the abattoir to which the text can only refer obliquely. One photograph, reproduced full page, is of a double corner in a narrow, brick-paved passage seen from a low viewpoint (fig. 147). Against a stone wall a double row of amputated calves' feet is neatly stacked. They are erect, rigid, and gruesome, arranged very carefully, vertical (except for one that has slipped sideways) and even paired as in life, but in an order possible only in death. Grisly found objects, they are hidden away from public sight—or perhaps they continue around the building, a grotesque plinth. A second photograph, this time taken from a high viewpoint, looks down on the interior of the slaughterhouse, and in a third, a swept track leads to a closed door (fig. 148). By contrast with the first photograph, these are confused and uncertain. They appear to be of attempts to clean the place, but whether we see water or blood is unclear, and the indeterminate bundle could be a cow-skin mop. The point is that we are made aware of the obsessive attempts at order and cleanliness.

Bataille tells us that the slaughterhouses are linked to religion in that temples were anciently the site both of prayer and killing, that a sacrifice united the two functions of church and slaughterhouse. Today, the slaughterhouse is a cursed place—quarantined; but, Bataille says, the victims of this quarantine are not so much the butchers or the animals but the people who cannot bear the sight of their own ugliness, "an ugliness that is result of an unhealthy need for cleanliness, for bilious pettiness and for boredom." The juxtaposition of interior and exterior views, and of high and low viewpoints, contrasts the tidy image of the place offered to public view with the chaos of the interior. The photographs are a greater affront than the text alone could be because they force us to witness the actuality of these places,

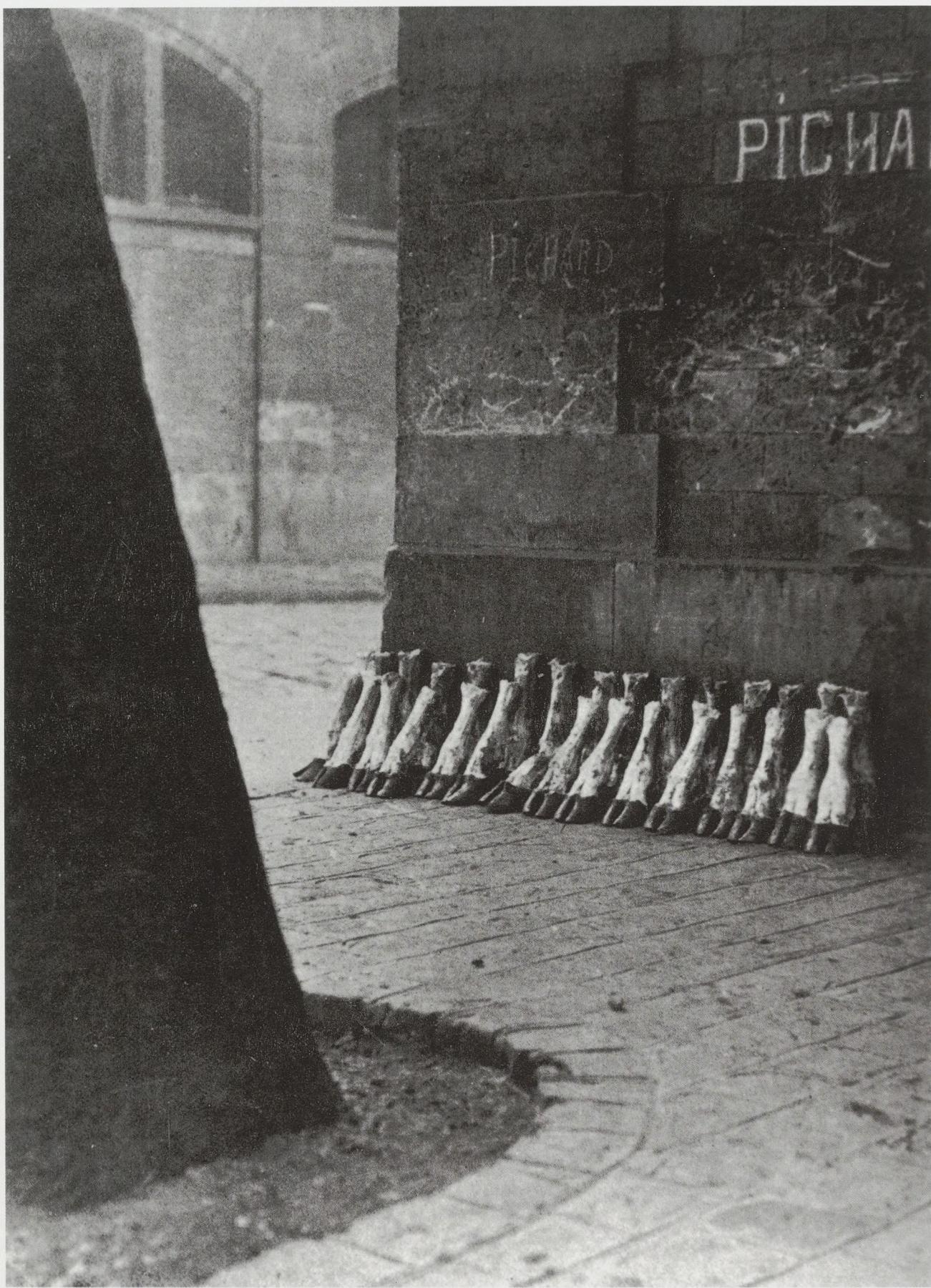


Fig. 147. Eli Lotar, *Abattoir (Slaughterhouse)*, 1929. Published in *Documents*.

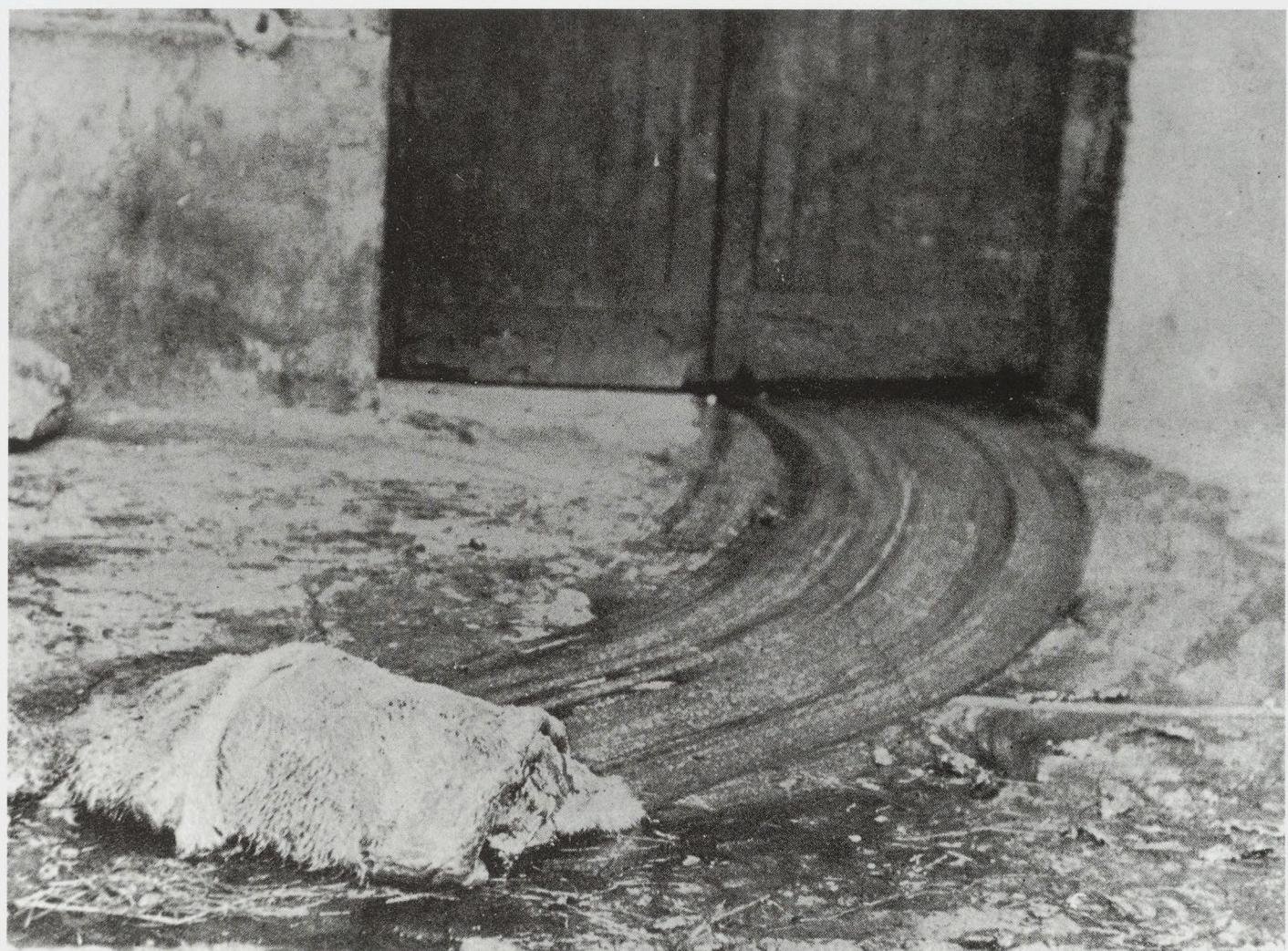


Fig. 148. Eli Lotar, *Abattoir (Slaughterhouse)*, 1929. Published in *Documents*.

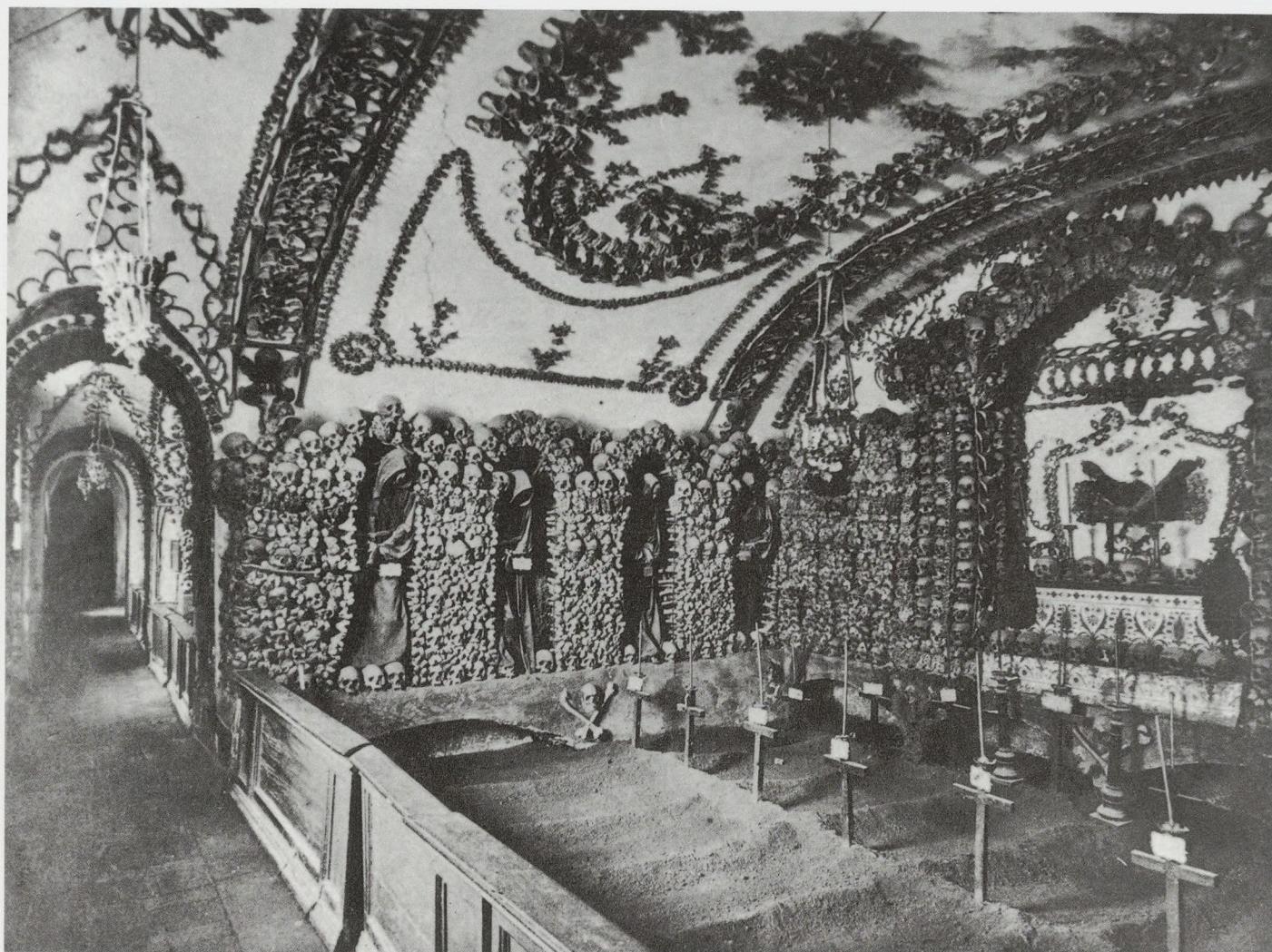


Fig. 149. Alinari, Capuchin Mortuary Chapel, Rome, n.d. Published in *Documents*.



Fig. 150. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1930. Published in *Documents*.



Fig. 151. Anonymous, 1931. Published in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*.

which, Bataille tells us, we cannot stand the sight of. Together, text and images demonstrate the dishonesty of shunning a basic activity in our society.

Photographs such as these were not the only ones in *Documents*, which, like the Belgian review *Variétés* and *La Révolution surréaliste*, also included film stills, photographs from popular and scientific sources, as well as documentary photographs relating to ethnography. But it is, above all, Boiffard's photographs that, by their own virtue and by virtue of their collaborative role with the provocative materialism of Bataille's writings, become critical images of their commonplace subjects. Just as Bataille, in his "critical dictionary" entries—which have a distant relationship to Gustave Flaubert's *Dictionary of Accepted Ideas*—refuses the possibility of any absolute definition of the "words" he has chosen to treat (such as *abattoir*, *architecture*, *eye*, *space*, *misfortune*), proposing instead to give not the meaning but the task of words, so the photographs deflect the customary or conventional meaning of the things photographed. It is not a question of giving a different meaning to these words or to these objects, but of loosening the straitjacket of "meaning by classification." As Bataille wrote in the entry for *informe*, "to make the academics happy, the universe must take on form. The whole of philosophy has no other aim but to put what is into a frock coat" (*Documents* 1, no. 7 [December 1929]: 382).

It is now possible to see how close Bataille's enterprise was to that of the mainstream surrealists; and it is also possible to see those elements that, by virtue of this closeness, made the undertaking particularly abhorrent to Breton and other surrealists. They saw as gratuitous his use of the repellent and the horrific, as when, at the end of the entry on *informe*, he writes: "to affirm that the universe resembles nothing and is *formless* comes down to saying that the universe is something like a spider or a blob of spit" (*Documents* 1, no. 7 [December 1929]: 382).

Breton reacted sharply against Bataille; the second *Manifesto*, published in the final issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* (no. 12 [December 1929]) was at pains to distinguish the surrealists' commitment to dialectical materialism from Bataille's "vulgar materialism." *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, which succeeded *La Révolution surréaliste* and ran from 1930 to 1933, affirmed at the start the surrealists' commitment to the Socialist International. The new review had very little of the aspect of an art magazine; illustrations were few—either four or eight pages—and were included at the back of each issue. The result of this was a new interest in the juxtaposition and arrangement of the illustrations

in relation to one another, or in the possibilities of small, independent visual essays on given themes or preoccupations. Often these bear little or no relation to any text, but are of interest in their own right and relate to such broadly social issues as the surrealists' antireligious stance, their opposition to inane patriotism, their attack on the colonial policies of the government. The two photographs in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (nos. 3–4 [December 1931]) of the installation by Aragon, Eluard, and Tanguy in the Anticolonial Exhibition, "The Truth about the Colonies," are not accompanied by an explanation, although an earlier text (no. 2 [October 1930]) by the Belgian Albert Valentin alerted readers to the forthcoming Colonial Exhibition. A series of images of erotic desires from Buñuel's *L'Age d'or* are prefaced by his photograph of a priest lasciviously clasping a young girl, accompanied by the title "Are you cold?"

The stills from *L'Age d'or* in particular can be seen as a counter to the "base" fetishism of Bataille and Boiffard's collaborations in *Documents*. Generally speaking, too, the more emphatic, though isolated, use of illustration—and especially photographic illustration—in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* could have been in part a response to the impact of *Documents*. But also contributing to the greater prominence of photography (included, for example, are some of Man Ray's most remarkable images: *Hommage à D. A. F. de Sade*, *Monument à D. A. F. de Sade* [fig. 6], and *Primacy of Matter over Thought* [fig. 52]), which was to culminate in *Minotaure*, were changes within the field of visual surrealism itself. The end of the twenties had seen a shift away from gestural automatism; the last issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* contained reproductions of paintings by Dalí and examples from Ernst's new series of collage engravings. Also, the concept of the surrealist object, first proposed in Breton's "Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality," was deliberately revitalized, appearing under the guise of the "symbolically functioning object" in a text by Dalí and a sequence of illustrations (*Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, no. 3 [December 1931]).

Dalí held a central position in relation to both these developments; it is significant that he had a positive attitude toward photography. He had been preoccupied with the relationship between photography and painting, and with the autonomous value of photography, during the two years between 1927 and 1929, prior to joining the surrealist movement but while considering his position in relation to it. Photography appeared to him at first incompatible with surrealist processes. In "Photography, Pure Creation of the Mind" (1927), he acclaimed

"photographic fantasy: more agile and faster in discoveries than murky subconscious processes!"<sup>21</sup> The point for Dali was that to *look* objectively was to invent. The problem was that most people could not see objectively; they "only see stereotyped images of things . . . and they find vulgar and normal everything they are in the habit of seeing every day, however marvelous and miraculous it may be."<sup>22</sup>

The camera, free of the stereotyped vision and aesthetic that hamper the human eye, can reveal the objective world. Both film and photography seemed to Dali full of potential and, in a sense, preferable to painting. "The world of the cinema and of painting are very different; precisely, the possibilities of photography and the cinema reside in that unlimited fantasy which is born of things themselves . . . a piece of sugar can become on the screen larger than an infinite perspective of gigantic buildings."<sup>23</sup> Similar ideas are expressed in a number of the texts he wrote for Catalan and Spanish avant-garde reviews at this time, and by 1929 he saw these ideas as quite compatible with surrealism. In "Photographic Fact" he wrote: "Photographic data . . . is still and ESSENTIALLY THE SAFEST POETIC MEDIUM and the most agile process for catching the most delicate osmoses which exist between reality and super-reality. The mere fact of photographic transposition means a total invention: the capture of a *secret reality*. Nothing proves the truth of super-reality so much as photography. The Zeiss lens has unexpected faculties of surprise!"<sup>24</sup> What should be pointed out, though, is that his ideas about photography and film were fed less by surrealist photography than by the Bauhaus. For example, he published in *L'Amic de les Arts* (March 31, 1929) the close-up detail of a marabou's eye, from Moholy-Nagy's *Painting, Photography, Film* (1925). But what Moholy-Nagy saw as an extension of the human eye through the camera, Dali saw as the basis of visionary invention, a potential disruption of the real through the real.

Dali's ideas on film and photography were realized through his collaboration with Luis Buñuel on *Un Chien andalou* with, among other things, its dramatic use of montage. Dali participated to a much lesser extent in *L'Age d'or*, and although he has subsequently been involved occasionally in cinema projects, never to comparable effect. He rarely worked directly with the camera, though he continued to use photographs in various ways: to illustrate his articles, as a starting point for painting, in montages like *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy* (fig. 17), as record of a surrealist object or event, and, occasionally, to write about photography, as in "Non-Euclidian Psy-

chology of a Photograph" (*Minotaure*, no. 7 [1935; fig. 152]).

Dali's text, "Surrealist Objects" (*Le Surrealisme au service de la révolution*, no. 3 [December 1931]) introduces symbolically functioning objects as successors to Giacometti's sculpture *Suspended Ball*, but emphasizes their independence of the formal aesthetic and sculptural concerns still in operation for Giacometti. In Dali's view, the symbolically functioning surrealist objects, constructed of ready-made materials and either capable of or hinting at movement, were outside any plastic considerations and dependent only on the individual erotic imagination. The point is made again through the layout of the illustrations in this issue, as David Sylvester argued in his lecture "Giacometti and the Surrealists."<sup>25</sup> *The Suspended Ball*, suggestive and Freudian, but still holding to sculptural means, is reproduced opposite a phallic construction by Miró entitled *Sculpture*; the true surrealist objects, by Breton, Gala Eluard, Dali, and Valentine Hugo, are reproduced opposite *photographs*: Dali's *Communication: Paranoiac Face*, a "found" photograph, with Dali's double reading of the image, and Man Ray's solarized photograph of a nude, *The Primacy of Matter over Thought*. Photographs, like the ready-made or "found" items that form the basis of the surrealist object, interpenetrate the real world directly.

In contrast to *Le Surrealisme au service de la révolution*, *Minotaure* (1933–39), the next major surrealist periodical, was lavishly produced and generously illustrated. It appeared to be predominantly a literary and artistic magazine; however, its title-page rubric reads almost like an expanded version of *Documents*:

Plastic Arts—poetry—music—architecture  
Ethnology—mythology—spectacle  
Psychology—psychiatry—psychoanalysis.

The surrealists were not in total control of this review, and it was not until the tenth issue (1937) that Breton, Duchamp, and other surrealists formed an editorial committee. However, the extent of their earlier collaboration confirms their general agreement with the magazine's direction, even from the beginning. In fact, in certain crucial areas outside the fine arts, *Minotaure* provides the richest coverage of all the reviews: in psychology, ethnology, and natural history, for example; and its commitment to the experimental and exploratory is evident in contributions from, for example, Jacques Lacan and Jean Frois-Wittman.

Photography is so widely used in *Minotaure* that, in spite of the frequent reassertion that the plastic activities,



Fig. 152. Anonymous, n.d. Published in *Minotaure*.



Fig. 153. Le Charles, *Praying Mantis*, 1933. Published in *Minotaure*.

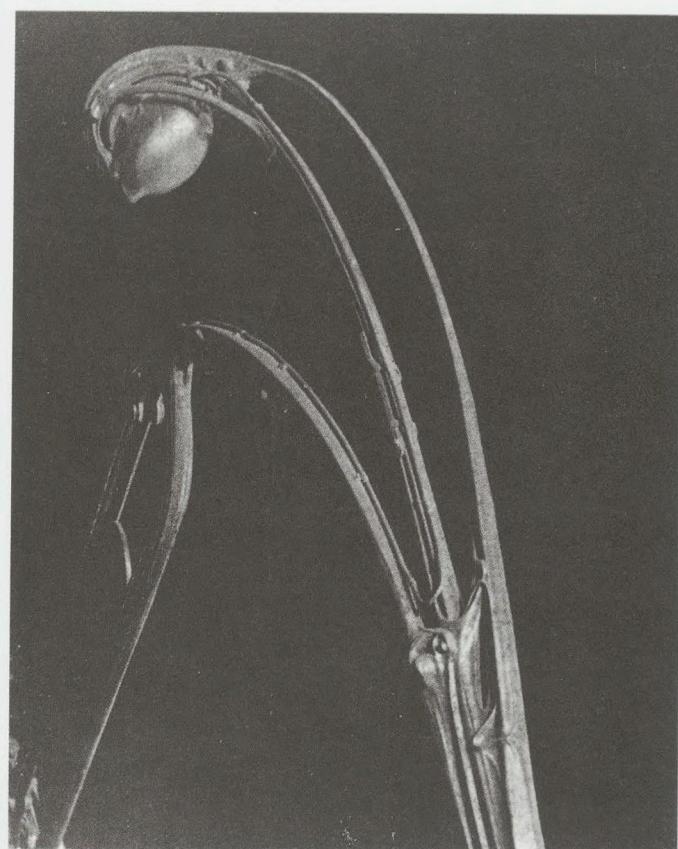


Fig. 154. Brassaï, *It's still a matter of a metallic throwback to Millet's Angelus (Il s'agit encore d'un atavisme métallique de l'Angelus de Millet)*, 1933. Published in *Minotaure*.

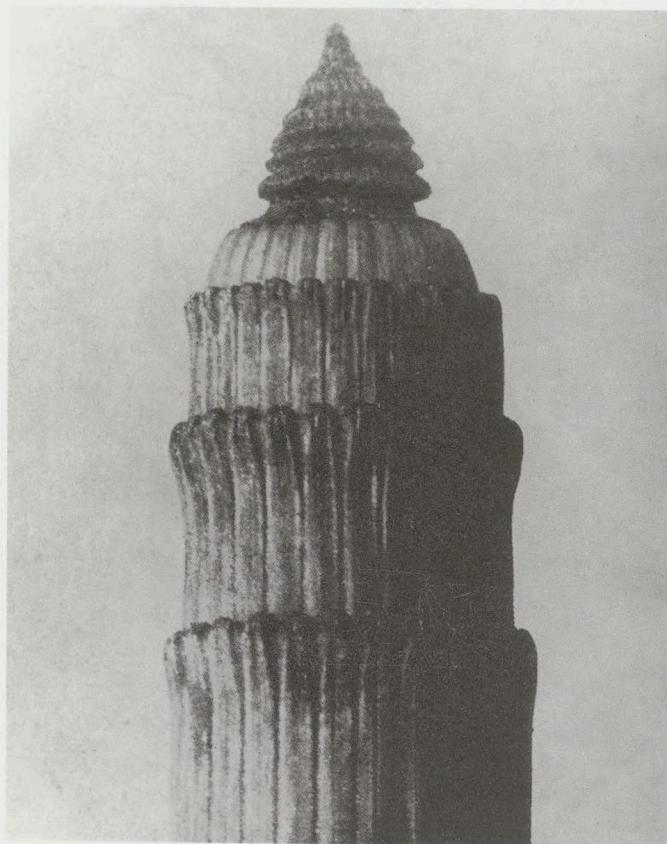


Fig. 155. Karl Blossfeldt, *Art Forms in Nature (Urformen der Kunst)*, 1928. Published in *Documents*.



Fig. 156. Karl Blossfeldt, *Art Forms in Nature (Urformen der Kunst)*, 1928. Published in *Documents*.

painting and objects, are central to surrealism, photographs are visually dominant as they had never been before. Fluid and flexible, and in a sense never open to that despairing charge Breton once made against painting—that it was a “lamentable expedient”—photography could not only penetrate but also make visible surrealist concerns with a reality about to be changed. And, of course, because they are mechanical reproductions, photographs can appear in magazines in a way that paintings cannot. Even though photographs enjoyed far more than illustration status in *Minotaure*—which presented them almost traditionally, as fine art—it is still important not to treat these images in isolation. Although there are many series of photographs that stand entirely on their own—like Bill Brandt’s figureheads on the *Scillies* or Man Ray’s “autobiographical” portraits of women—there are also many instances in which principal surrealist themes involve a collaboration between text and photograph. There is, for one thing, extensive use of photography as evidence and record—in the second issue, for example, devoted to the ethnographic expedition to Dakar-Djibouti. It is interesting to compare this with Breton’s “Souvenir of Mexico” in the final issue (no. 12 [1939]), which includes photographs by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. While far exceeding a snapshot record, these are nonetheless about the “customs, lives, and beliefs” of the people, as well as about their social conditions and the extremes of life and death in the country, a poetic and political ethnology. Breton wrote of one photograph: “The very great art of Manuel Alvarez Bravo permits us in these pages to discover Mexico’s extreme poles. Here is a workshop making children’s coffins (infant mortality in Mexico reaches 75%) and I know no better plastic construction. The relationship of light to shadow, of the stacked pile of boxes and the grill, and the poetically startling image of the phonograph in the lower coffin are superior evocations of the palpable atmosphere which bathes the whole country.”<sup>26</sup>

In *Minotaure* the theme of the city, which we examined in *Nadja*, reappears in a number of different guises, but perhaps most notably in a denial of urban form in favor of meditations on nature and ruins. Man Ray and Brassai took the photographs to accompany Dali’s text “On the Terrifying and Edible Beauty of Modern-Style Architecture” (nos. 3–4 [1933]). Man Ray took the Gaudí buildings in Barcelona, Brassai the Metro entrances in Paris. These, photographed to resemble obsessional or erotic animate beings (the praying mantis, for example, with the title *It’s Still a Matter of a Metallic Throwback to Millet’s Angelus* [*Il s’agit encore d’un atavisme métallique de l’Angelus de Millet*; fig. 154]), seem intentionally

to answer those of Karl Blossfeldt that Bataille used in *Documents* (1, no. 1 [June 1929]), taken from *Art Forms in Nature (Urformen der Kunst* [1928]), in which the forms of plants closely resemble those of architecture (fig. 155). In the *Minotaure* photographs, the animation, or even anthropomorphism, of ruins and of architecture is frequently present. Brassai’s gargoyles brood over a distant illuminated Paris that resembles Rome (*Minotaure*, no. 7 [1935]); this photograph accompanied a translation from the *Nights* of Edward Young, a late eighteenth-century English poet admired by Breton (fig. 157). The molded corner of a building casts its shadow as a grotesque face on the wall. Brassai’s photographs of graffiti, faces gouged into the wall, “prehistoric drawings” two steps from the Opera, were reproduced in *Minotaure* (nos. 3–4 [1933]; fig. 181).

As often occurred in *Documents*, but on a larger scale in *Minotaure*, photographs extend, amplify, sometimes even provide the *raison d’être* of a text, as in Benjamin Péret’s “La Ruine des ruines” (nos. 12–13 [1939]), an elusive text in some respects resembling the work of Bataille. Péret talks of ruins as the legendary childhood of man, progressively enfeebled. The ruins of each age have their own legends; man has moved “down” from tiger through wolf to dog. A photograph by Bravo of a completely undistinguished ruined doorway becomes the image of a dog. Among a number of others, photographs by Ubac accompany this article: *Fossil of the Stock Exchange*, *Fossil of the Opera (Fossile de l’Opera*; fig. 158), *Fossil of the Eiffel Tower*. By a complex process of montage and solarization, Ubac succeeds in creating a texture like that of a crumbling plaster wall, in which the remains of the building emerge in an ambiguous negative-positive effect resembling a fossil. Péret’s text ends with the words “What a beautiful spring! The Opera is in flower as never before!”<sup>27</sup> This evokes a disorientation of a slightly different kind, similar to the effect of the Magritte photomontage in the last issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, in which the Place de l’Opera suddenly blooms into a field of cows (fig. 96). The variations notwithstanding, all these images and texts show that the city was in no sense a symbol of progress and modernity for the surrealists.

To accompany another text, “Nature Devours Progress and Outstrips It,” Péret reproduced a photograph of a locomotive abandoned to a virgin forest (fig. 159), an image Breton regretted not having on hand for his seminal text “Beauty Will Be Convulsive.” Péret describes the locomotive as “smoking orchids.” He continues, “the flame of the forest, after licking its prey for a long time, eventually swallows it like an oyster.” Another photo-



Fig. 157. Brassai, *Gargoyles*, 1933. Published in *Minotaure*.

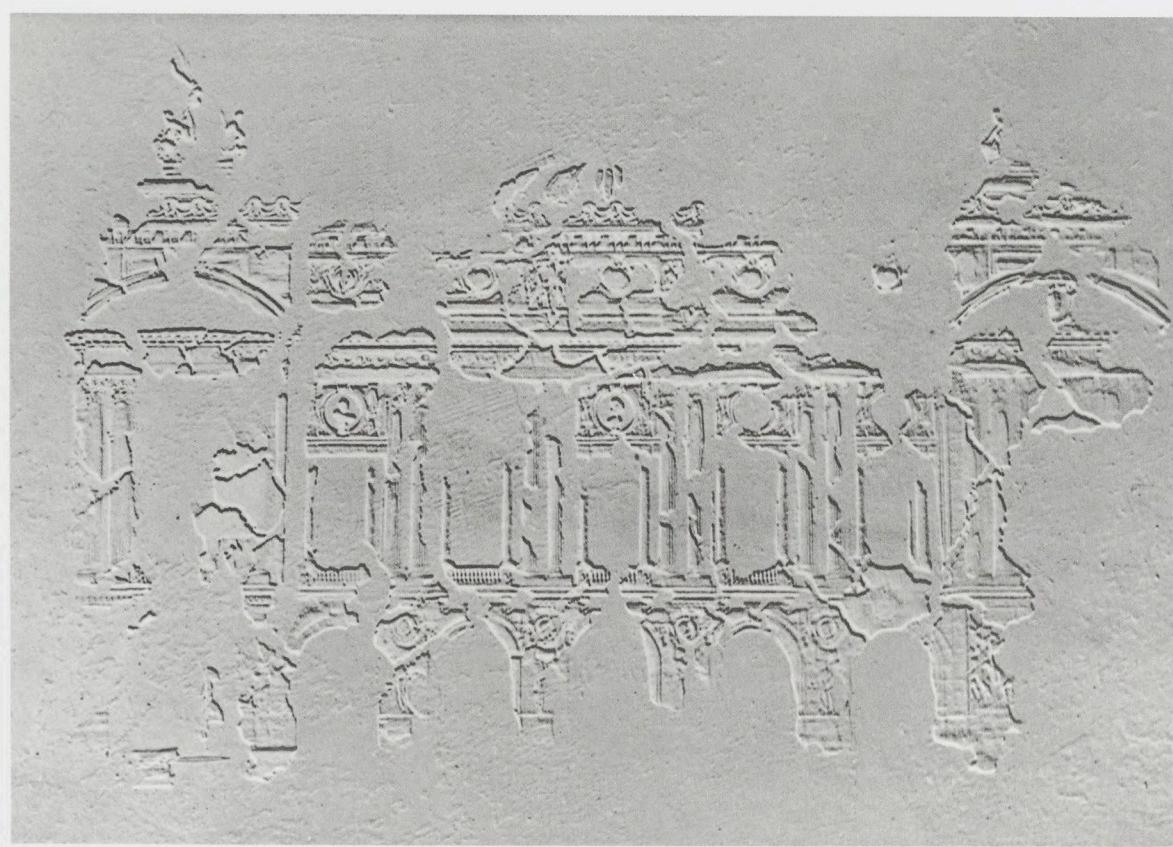


Fig. 158. Raoul Ubac, *Fossil of the Opera* (*Fossile de l'Opera*), 1939. Published in *Minotaure*.



Fig. 159. Anonymous, n.d. Published in *Minotaure*.



Fig. 160. Anonymous, n.d. Published in *Minotaure*.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 161. Brassaï, "The house I live in, my life, my writings . . ." ("La maison que j'habite, ma vie, ce que j'écris . . ."), 1933. Published in *Minotaure* and *L'Amour fou*.



Fig. 162. Brassaï, *Magique-Circonstancielle*, 1933. Published in *Minotaure*.

graph, of a pine tree growing out of a willow (fig. 160), accompanies the text's final lines: "Far away the slow skyscrapers of trees will build themselves to signify a defiance impossible to remove."<sup>28</sup> Images of civilization's artifacts consumed by triumphant and ravenous nature, these photographs and texts combine as symbols of the surrealists' opposition to their own culture. Curiously, this also becomes an extension of the picturesque movement that characterized the aesthetic of the late eighteenth century, an affirmation of the wild against the tame, of nature against civilization.

The two texts by Breton that were later to be incorporated into *L'Amour fou*, "Beauty Will Be Convulsive"—the title taken from the last lines of *Nadja*—and "La Nuit du tournesol," were both published in *Minotaure* (nos. 5 [1934] and 7 [1935]). As he had in *Nadja* and *Les Vases communicants*, Breton again used photographs, although these play more varied roles than those of *Nadja*. "La Beauté sera convulsive" is the most complete statement Breton ever made about the aesthetic of surrealism. As far as he is concerned, that aesthetic is in no way separable from life, and aesthetic response is not attributable only to works of art: "I acknowledge without the least embarrassment my profound insensibility in the presence of natural spectacles and works of art that do not immediately produce in me a state of physical disturbance characterized by the sensation of a wind brushing across my forehead and capable of causing a veritable shiver. I have never been able to resist relating this sensation to erotic pleasure, and can discover between them differences only of degree."<sup>29</sup> First, he makes no distinction between nature and works of art in their capacity to produce this sensation, and, second, the sensation itself is fundamentally indistinguishable from an erotic one.

The photographs by Brassaï of crystals and corals involve a complicated reciprocal relationship with the text. The text is headed by the photograph of rock salt crystals (fig. 161). The work of art, Breton writes, should present the same hardness, rigidity, regularity, and luster as a crystal. But a work of art is only a fragment of life; as always for Breton, it is the totality of a life that matters: "The house I live in, my life, my writings—I dream that these things appear from far away like cubes of rock crystal seen at close range." The photograph stands as the only possible medium to convey the presence of the objects and works of nature that reveal for Breton the condition of convulsive beauty. In this context the capacity of the camera to reveal things not easily open to the eye also takes on importance: Man Ray's *Explante-fixe* (fig. 75), the split second at which the dancer

has stopped but her skirts are still swirling like open petals. This relates to one of the conditions of convulsive beauty, the expiration of movement. A piece of feathery seaweed illuminated under water to resemble lightning is captioned: "The image as it is produced in automatic writing." And then there are also the objects that, by virtue of some peculiarity of their growth, suggest something quite different from themselves: the mandragora root, which had grown into a form that always reminded Breton of Aeneas carrying his father from the ruins of Troy—the root photographed by Man Ray on a globe. Or the potato, whose roots expand and branch (fig. 162): trophy head or ritual mask, emblem at the end of Breton's discussion of "*magique-circonstancielle*," the species of convulsive beauty in which a found object is perceived as a sign of the finder's desire. When *L'Amour fou* was published, Breton substituted for Brassaï's photographs of corals an underwater photograph of the Great Barrier Reef, in which (for him) the perfection of spontaneous creation that had been preeminently realized by the crystals is replaced by the permanent flux of life. "Life, in its constant process of formations and destruction, seems to me unable to be absorbed more concretely by the human eye than between aragonite hedges full of bluetits and the bridge of treasures of Australia's Great Barrier Reef."<sup>30</sup> As directed by the text that accompanies them, the photographs become interpretable as documents of convulsive beauty, objective and unconscious, rather than contrived by the hand of, say, an artist.

"La Nuit du tournesol" was published in the issue of *Minotaure* (no. 7 [1935]) that was most successfully unified by a single theme—in this case, night. Three of Brassaï's photographs of Paris at night—of the Tour St. Jacques (fig. 163), the flower market (fig. 164), and the vegetable market of Les Halles—record the sites of Breton's night wanderings in the company of a woman with whom he experiences (as he had not with Nadja) "*l'amour fou*." These photographs are of a Paris transformed, illuminated from an unknown source, in complete contrast with those in *Nadja*.

The Paris of both *Nadja* and "La Nuit de tournesol" are found objects for the photographer. But what is found in *Nadja*, straightforward, even banal images, has been transformed in "La Nuit de tournesol" into images of the Marvelous, reorganized by the finder's experience of desire. The text of *Nadja*, in which "*l'amour fou*" eludes Breton, yields and is "illustrated" by photographs that record all but lifeless sites. The text of "La Nuit de tournesol" allows and requires more magically charged images. Yet still, the photographs insist that this is Paris as *found*; whereas a painting that attempted to depict a

L'AMOUR FOU

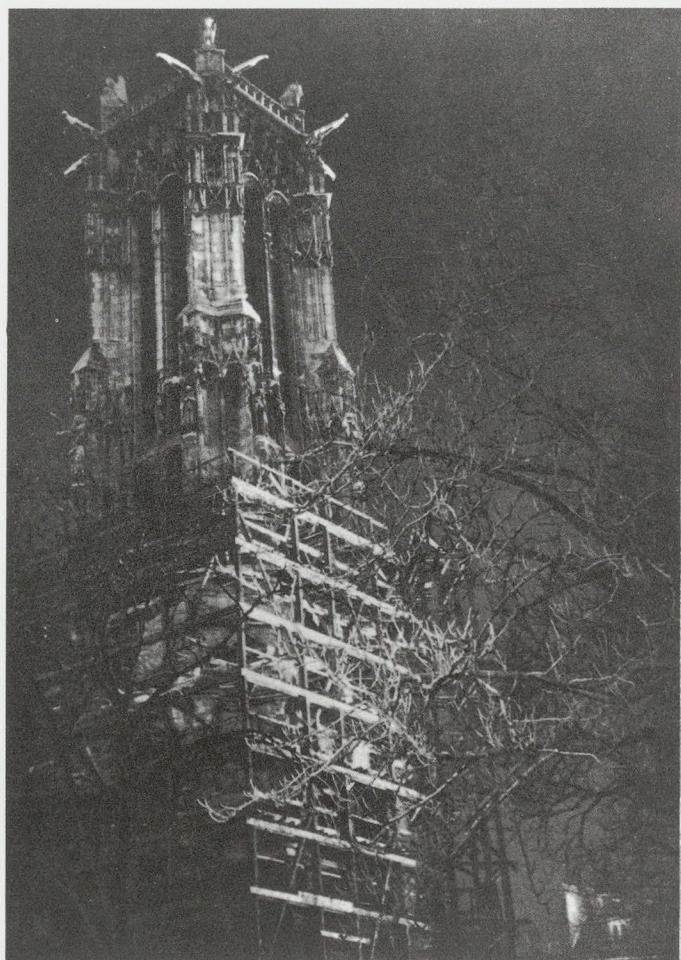


Fig. 163. Brassaï, "In Paris the wobbling Saint-Jacques Tower . . ." ("A Paris la Tour Saint-Jacques chancelante . . ."), 1935.  
Published in *Minotaure* and *L'Amour fou*.



Fig. 164. Brassaï, "Everything also numbed by night . . ." ("Tout engourdi aussi par la nuit . . ."), 1935.  
Published in *Minotaure* and *L'Amour fou*.

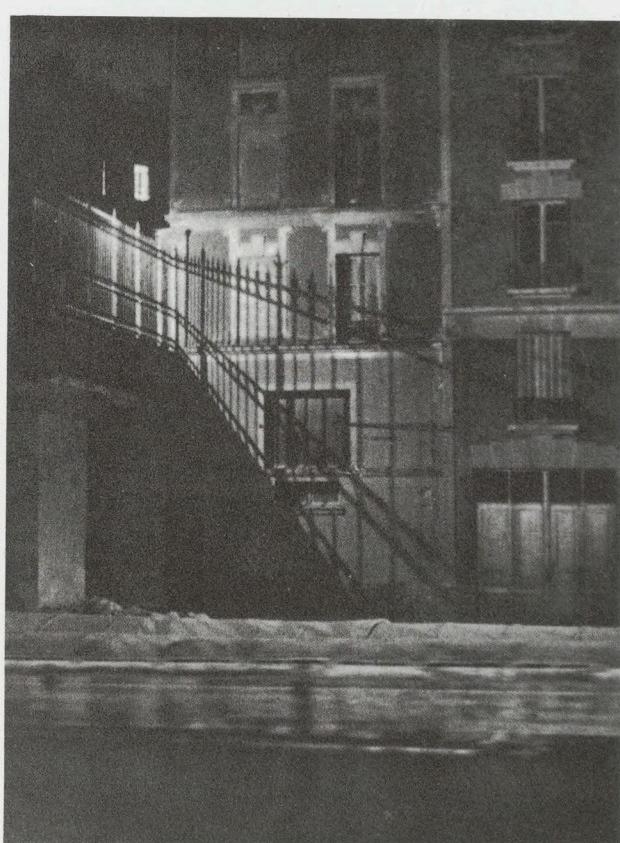
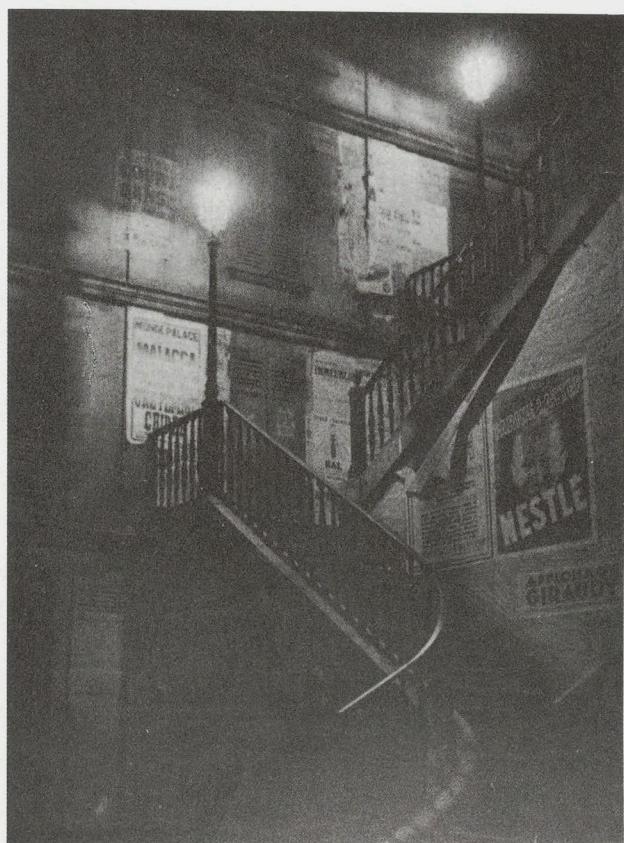
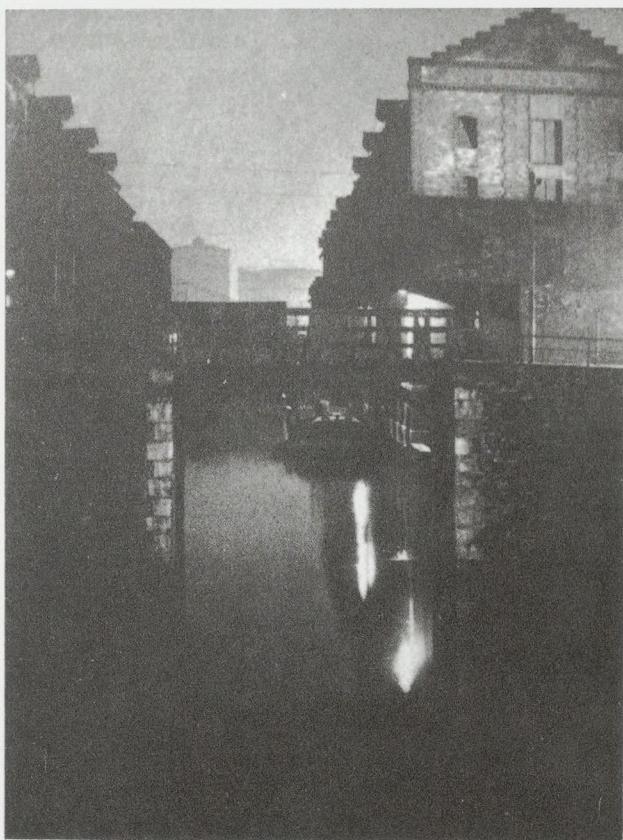


Fig. 165. Brassai, *Parisian Nights (Nuits parisiennes)*, 1935. Published in *Minotaure*.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 166. Brassaï, *The Statue of Marshal Ney in the Fog* (*La Statue du Maréchal Ney dans le brouillard*), 1935.

similar transformation would imply only that the metamorphosis within the site of the real had been created, contrived.

That photographs—even documents, records—can apparently reveal contrasting realities in the objects they seem merely to find suggests the epistemological questions raised by other photographically illustrated texts in the “night” issue of *Minotaure* (no. 7 [1935]). Roger Caillois’s essay on mimicry in nature, “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia,” and Jacques Delamain’s “Night Birds,” on natural camouflage, challenge any neat division between scientific classification of natural phenomena and poetic metaphors found in nature. The testing of the validity of knowledge gained by classification is continued in a variety of ways. One of the most curious texts on this is A. M. Petijean’s “Spectral Analysis of the Monkey,” in which photographs (fig. 168) and an engraving help to demonstrate man’s inability to represent the monkey to himself: “Constant ambiguous movement between monkey and man . . . proposes the absolute relativity of biology, make us doubt whether man is a monkey who monkeys the monkey, or monkey a man who monkeys man.”<sup>31</sup>

On the same theme, Brassai’s night photographs of moths fluttering against glass or toward a candle flame set up a contrast with two “photographic-documents” (as they are identified in *Minotaure*) by the scientific photographer Le Charles, of a moth and a feather-winged fly. The photographs call into question the nature of these insects or, rather, what constitutes knowledge about them: scientific classification or poetic metaphor? They and the first photograph in the sequence, Man Ray’s *Le Bouquet*—reproduced opposite the Le Charles’s photographs—an exploding, feathery, fireworklike form of indefinable origin (perhaps ink on glass), are visual counterparts, but not illustrations of, Edward Young’s passionate utterances. Also in the sequence are more photographs of streets and squares at night, Brassai’s

*Parisian Nights* (*Nuits Parisiennes*; fig. 165). Together, all of the photographs offer some of the many possible associations, meanings, or images of “night,” both rational and irrational. The photographs have been released from a strictly “informative” mode and give to reality values that are poetic and scientific, lyrical and potential. In the second *Surrealist Manifesto*, Breton wrote about “the rose” rather than “the night,” but he proposed a comparable series of investigations: “the rose . . . might be in succession something from the garden, something with a particular role in a dream, something impossible to separate from the ‘optical bouquet,’ something that can totally change its nature by passing into automatic writing, something that has none of the rose’s properties except those the painter has decided to retain in a surrealist painting, and finally, something entirely different from itself, which returns to the garden. This is a far cry from any idealist conception.”<sup>32</sup> Particularly in the hands of the surrealists, photography, too, could be a medium of transformation or could reveal contrasting and even contradictory realities.

*Minotaure* was certainly the review in which photography received most sustained attention, and much more could be said about it than has been attempted here. It was, of course, the site of many great individual surrealist photographic images, like Brassai’s landscape-nude, *False Sky* (*Ciel postiche*) or his *Troglodyte* (fig. 167), the cave-mask confounding interior and exterior. But the purpose of this essay has been primarily to consider those photographs (from whatever source) that were chosen for their associations with a specific text, whether the photograph generated—or was generated by—the text. In this consideration, we have examined the parallel mechanisms by which image and text investigate a given idea in the context of surrealism. Our examination, then, has been concerned less with surrealist photography than with photography in the service of surrealism.

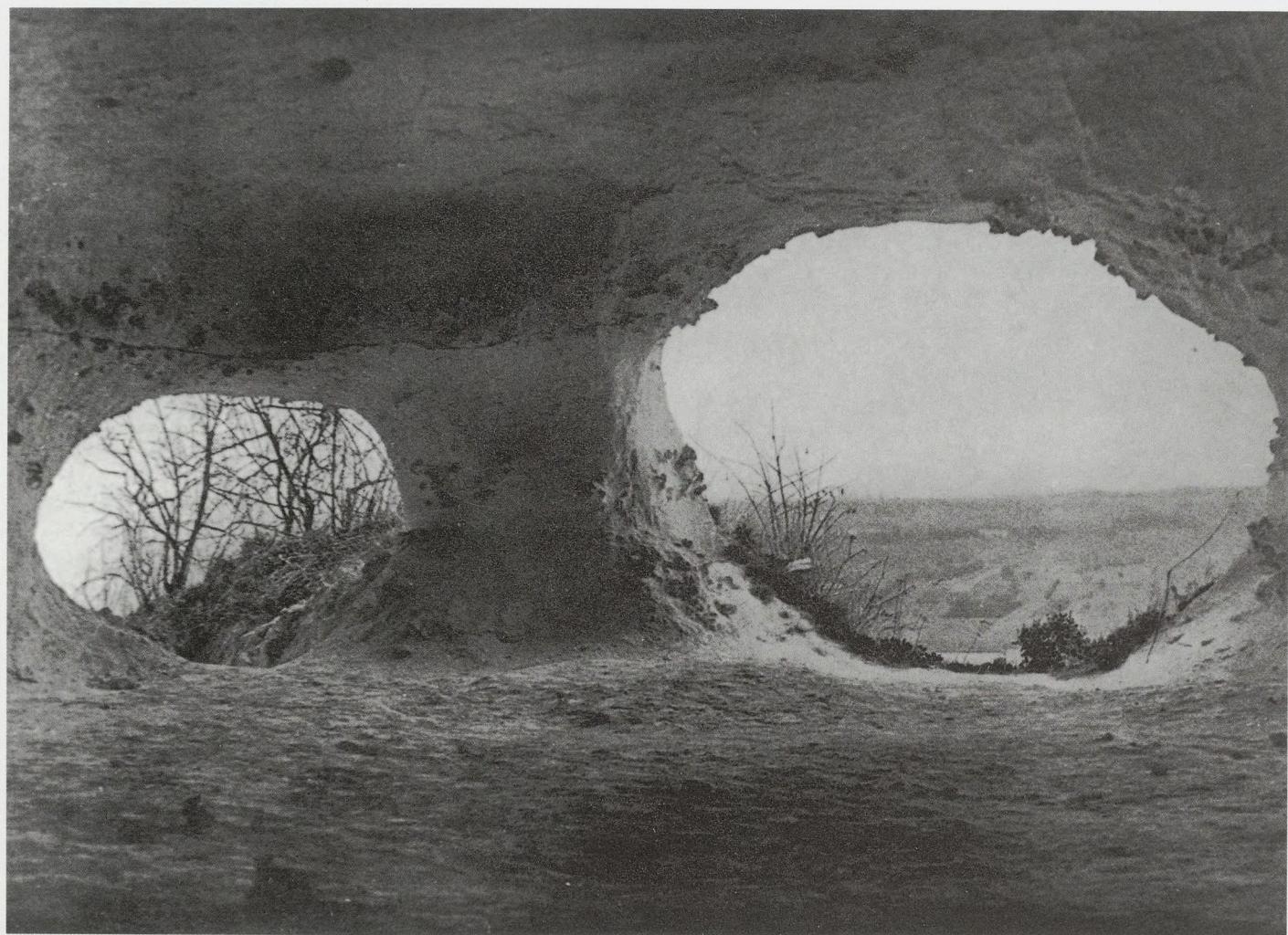


Fig. 167. Brassaï, *Troglodyte*, 1936. Published in *Minotaure*.

## PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE SURREALIST TEXT

1. André Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. S. Watson Taylor (New York: Icon Editions, 1972), p. 2. The articles from *La Révolution surréaliste* were published as a book in 1928. Quotations are taken from the English edition.
2. André Breton, "Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality" (1924); trans. Bravig Imbs, in Breton, *What is Surrealism?* (London: Pluto Press, 1978), p. 22.
3. See José Pierre, *Surréalisme et anarchie* (Paris: Plasma, 1983), p. 11.
4. Max Morise, "Les Yeux enchantés," *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 1 (December 1924), p. 27.
5. André Breton, "Entrée des mediums," *Littérature*, nouvelle série, no. 6 (November 1922), p. 1. Among the very few illustrations in *Littérature* are three by Man Ray; a fourth, unidentified, is either by Atget or someone who knew his work well.
6. J.-A. Boiffard, P. Eluard, R. Vitrac, "Preface," *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 1 (December 1924), p. 2.
7. Pierre Naville, "Beaux-Arts," *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 3 (April 1925), p. 27.
8. André Breton, *Exposition dada Max Ernst* (Paris: Sans Pareil, 1921); reprint ed., Max Ernst, *Beyond Painting* (New York: Wittenborn Schulz, 1948), p. 177.
9. André Breton, "Le Surrealisme et la peinture," *La Révolution surréaliste*, nos. 9–10 (October 1927); trans., Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, p. 32. Breton illustrates Man Ray here not with one of his rayographs, but with a photograph of geometrical constructions reflected in a mirror.
10. Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," *Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1978), p. 179.
11. André Breton, *Nadja* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 74. The new and revised edition contained a number of new photographs and for the first time identified the photographers in certain cases. The Place Dauphine photograph is not attributed to anyone. It appears that Man Ray also took photographs of the sites mentioned in *Nadja* (Lucien Treillard, conversation with the author, 1984).
12. André Breton, *L'Amour fou* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937), p. 47. Hereafter, references to *L'Amour fou* appear parenthetically in the text.
13. Quoted in Dominique Lecoq, "Jacques-André Boiffard ou l'histoire d'un œil," *Georges Bataille et Raymond Queneau, 1930-40*, no. 4 (Clermont-Ferrand: n. pub., 1982), p. 40.
14. Michel Beaujour, "Qu'est-ce que 'Nadja'?" *N. R. F.* 15, no. 172 (April 1967): 797–98.
15. *Ibid.*
16. I take the term *immaterialism* from Berkeley, who placed the "reality of things in ideas" and whose *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (1713) Breton was reading during the period recorded in *Nadja*. Breton notes the strange coincidence that an image chosen by Nadja to describe the movements of their thoughts—namely, a fountain in the Tuilleries gardens—is identical to that used by Berkeley, "where from the point of view of the defense of the idealist attitude it takes on a capital significance" (*Nadja*, p. 86).
17. Georges Bataille, "Le Gros Orteil," *Documents* 1, no. 6 (November 1929): 297–302.
18. Georges Bataille, "La Figure humaine," *Documents* 1, no. 4 (September 1929): 194–200.
19. Georges Limbour, "Eschyle, le carnival et les civilisés," *Documents* 2, no. 2 (February 1930): 97–102.
20. Georges Bataille, "L'Esprit moderne et le jeu des transposition," *Documents* 2, no. 8 (August 1930): 49–52.
21. Salvador Dali, "La Fotographia, pura creació de l'esperit," *L'Amic de les Arts* 2, no. 18 (September 1927): 90–91. The translations from this and the following texts by Dali are from Ades, *Salvador Dali* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982).
22. Salvador Dali, "Els meus quadros del Saló de Tardor," *L'Amic de les Arts* 2, no. 19 (October 1927): supplement.
23. Salvador Dali, "Film-art. Fil Antiartístico," *Gaceta Literaria* (Madrid), no. 24 (December 15, 1927); Ades, p. 49.
24. Salvador Dali, "La Dada Fotográfica" *Gaceta de les Arts* (Barcelona) 2, no. 6 (1929); Ades, p. 55.
25. David Sylvester, "Giacometti and the Surrealists," Yaseen Lecture, delivered at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1982.
26. André Breton, "Souvenir du Mexique," *Minotaure*, nos. 12–13 (1939): 31–48.
27. Benjamin Péret, "La Ruine des ruines," *Minotaure*, nos. 12–13 (1939): 57–65.
28. Benjamin Péret, "La Nature dévore le progrès et le dépasse," *Minotaure*, no. 10 (1937), pp. 20–21.
29. André Breton, "La Beauté sera convulsive," *Minotaure*, no. 5 (1934); trans., David Gascoyne, in André Breton, *What is Surrealism?* (New York: Monad Press, 1978), p. 160. "La Beauté sera convulsive" became the opening chapter of *L'Amour fou* (1937).
30. André Breton, *What is Surrealism?* p. 163.
31. A. M. Petitjean, "Analyse spectrale du singe," *Minotaure*, no. 7 (1935): 58.
32. André Breton, "Second Manifeste du Surréalisme," *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 12 (December 1929): 6.

L'AMOUR FOU

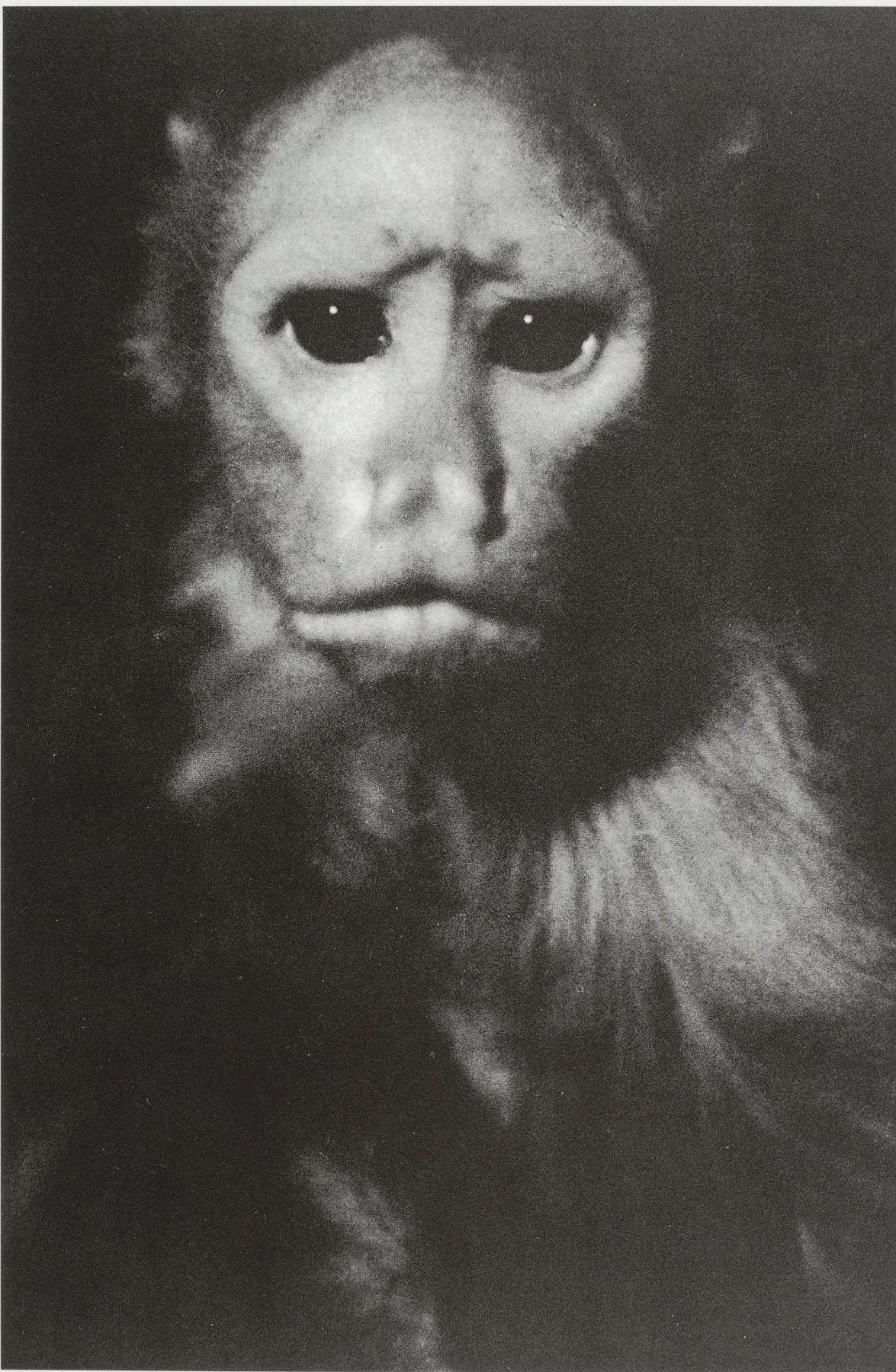


Fig. 168. Anonymous, n.d. Published in *Minotaure*.

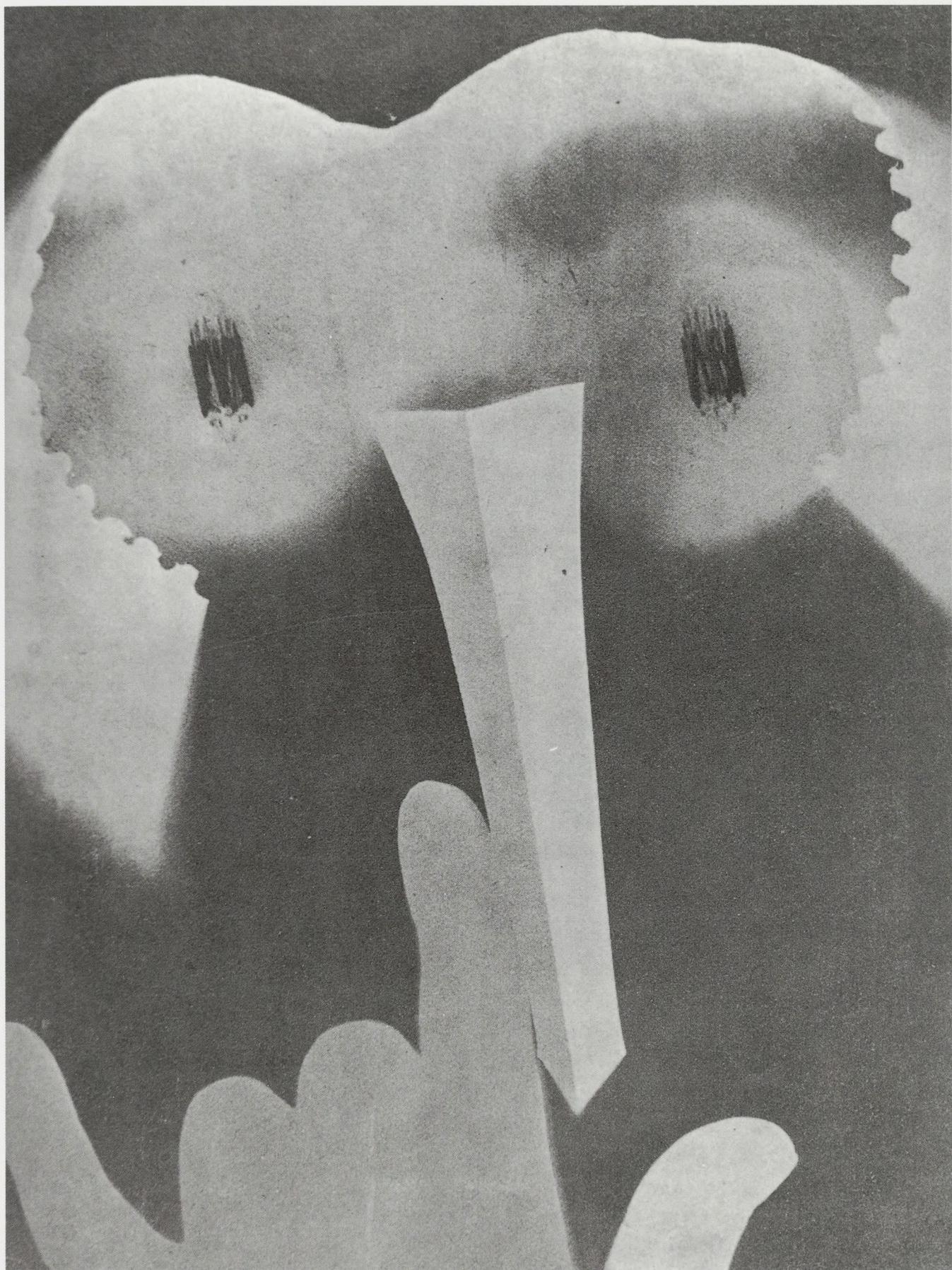


Fig. 169. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1922. Published in *Littérature*.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 170. Raoul Ubac, *Post Your Poems / Post Your Pictures (Affichez vos poèmes / affichez vos images)*, 1935.  
Collection Yves Gevaert, Brussels.

# *Artist Biographies and Bibliographies*

compiled by Winifred Schiffman

(Bibliographical note: In the preparation of the following biographical entries, the reference works that have been particularly helpful throughout are Adam Biro and René Passeron, *Dictionnaire général du Surréalisme et de ses environs* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982); Edouard Jaguer, *Les Mystères de la chambre noire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982); and David Travis, *Photographs from the Julien Levy Collection* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1976). In addition to information gathered from interviews, I have consulted the works listed in an extremely selective bibliography at the end of each entry.)

L'AMOUR FOU

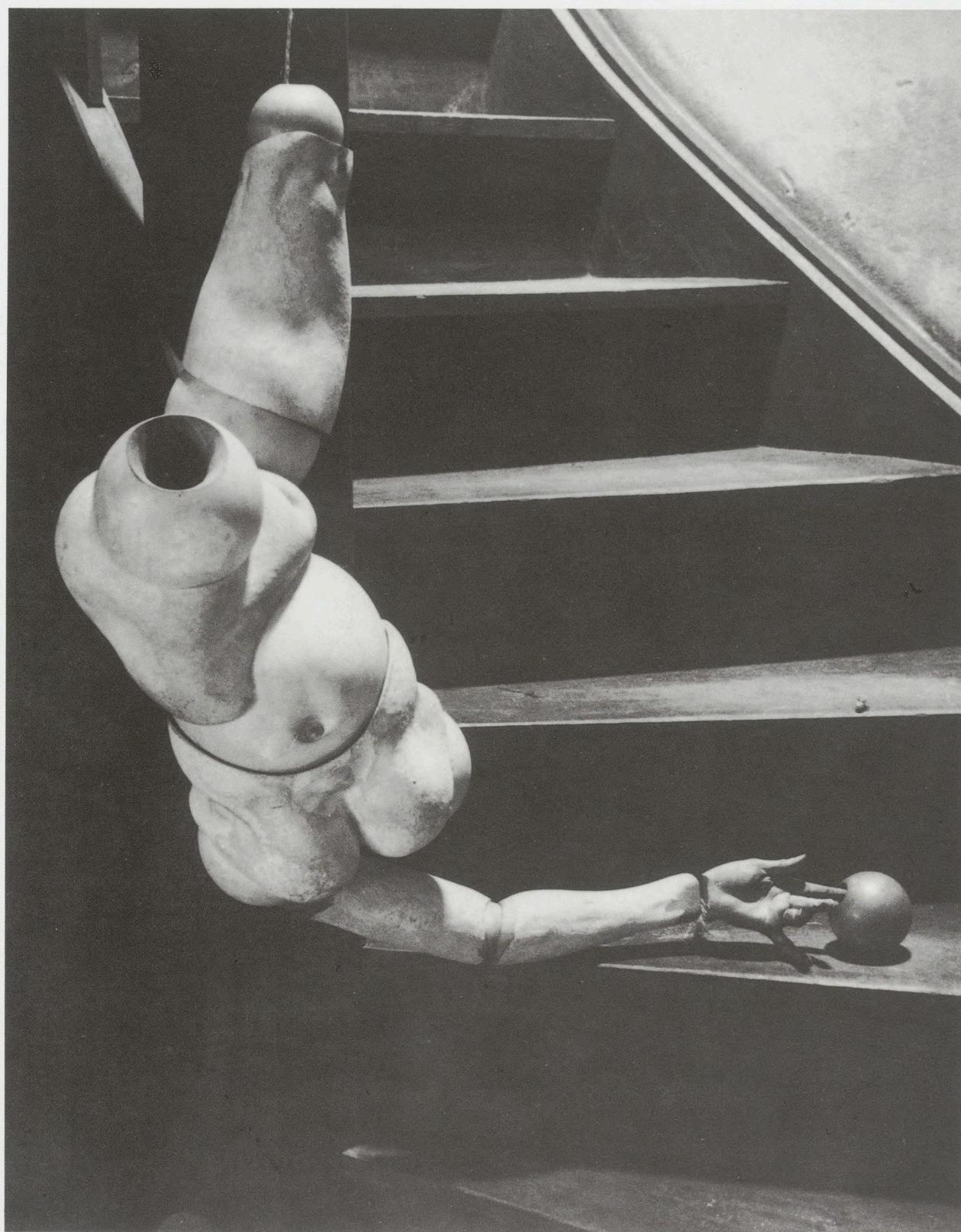


Fig. 171. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1935. Private collection, Paris.

**HANS BELLMER**

(Born 1902, Katowice, Silesia [German-Polish border]; died 1975, Paris)

Hans Bellmer's childhood was animated by the opposing personalities of his parents. His father, an engineer, was domineering and authoritarian, while his mother was of a dreamy nature. To escape from the strictures imposed by his father, Bellmer invested his energies in a child's world of fantasy. His cousin Ursula served as his accomplice in this, actively participating in the play world Bellmer created of his parents' home and garden. Ursula's perverse innocence nourished Bellmer's imagination and can be identified as a source of his later relationship with his *Poupées*, the surrealistic doll objects he created and photographed. Bellmer recalled the ambience of his home in the text accompanying his first photographic album, *Die Puppe* (1934; Robert Valançay, trans., *La Poupée* [Paris: Guy Lévis-Mano, 1936]).

At the insistence of his father, Bellmer went to work in a steel mill and coal mine from 1920, the end of his secondary schooling, until 1923, an experience that generated the chthonic, or infernal, imagery of his later work. Again in obedience to his father, Bellmer attended the Berlin Technische Hochschule (1923–24). The profession of engineering repelled him, but the instruction he received in precise technical drawing developed the aptitude for minute execution and attention to detail that was to play a role in his art. At the Hochschule, Bellmer studied perspective and drawing with George Grosz and established close contact with other dada-imbued artists such as Otto Dix, John Heartfield, and Rudolf Schlichter. After abandoning his studies in 1924, Bellmer worked as a typographer for Malik-Verlag, a Berlin-based publishing company, while free-lancing book-jacket designs and illustrating books for other firms. That same year he went to Paris and made contact with the surrealists. Following his marriage to Margarete (1927), the couple opened up their own publicity agency. Bellmer traveled extensively to Tunisia, Italy, and to Colmar, France, where the intense expressionism of Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece* deeply affected him (1932).

Bellmer's exposure to the extraordinary doll maker, Lotte Pritzel, planted a seed that slowly germinated until, in 1932, Bellmer saw the *Tales of Hoffmann*. In Offenbach's opera, Coppelia, an automated doll, plays a principal role. During the next years, with the rise of the Nazis, Bellmer decided to stop all work for the state and to concentrate with his wife on the construction of his first *Poupée*, after having collaborated on Max Reinhardt's Berlin production of *The Sandman* (1933), a dramatization



Fig. 172. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1934.  
Private collection, Paris.

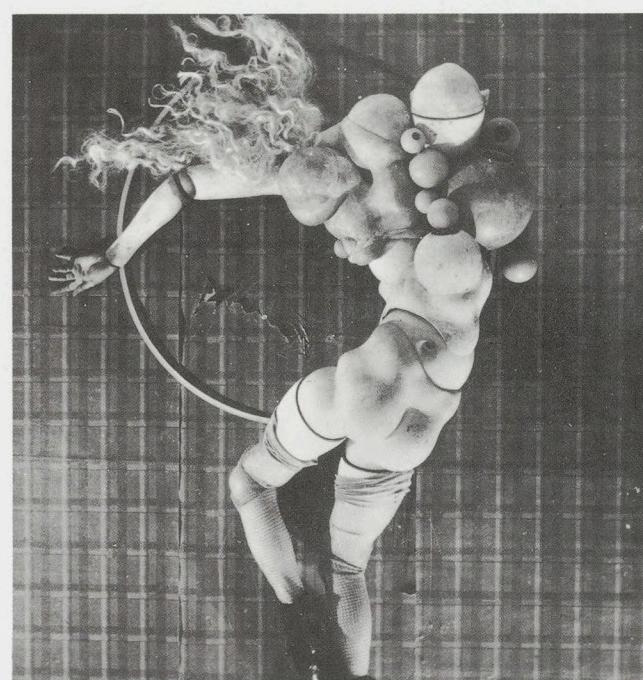


Fig. 173. Hans Bellmer, *Doll (La Poupée)*, 1935.  
Manoukian Collection, Paris.

of an E. T. A. Hoffmann story that features a female automaton. Bellmer fashioned the first doll from pieces of games he found in a trunk that had been his as a child. He then created another *Poupée*, put together with ball joints, and photographed it in various provocative positions. The photographs, hand colored by the artist for the original edition, were published with Bellmer's text at his own expense as *Die Puppe* (Karlsruhe, 1934). The following year the images appeared under the title "Variations sur le montage d'unè mineure articulée" in *Minotaure*, no. 6 (1935) and were enthusiastically received by the Parisian surrealists.

The second series of *Poupées* (created 1937–38) was accompanied by a suite of poems by Paul Eluard, "Jeux vagues de la poupée," and published in the magazine *Messages* (1939), then as a book, *Les Jeux de la poupée* (Paris: Les Editions Premières, 1949).

With Margarete's death and the triumph of Nazism, Bellmer left Berlin permanently to settle in Paris (1938). Frequenting the surrealist milieu there, his close friends became Max Ernst, Man Ray, Paul Eluard, Yves Tanguy, and A. Pieyre de Mandiargues. With the outbreak of war, Bellmer was interned (with Ernst) as a German citizen in the Mille prison camp near Aix-en-Provence. The camp, formerly a brickyard, became an important pictorial influence on Bellmer. Ernst and Bellmer collaborated on a drawing set inside a brick structure; the work brings to mind a similar joint effort between Ernst and Eluard made at the beginning of the 1920s. Bellmer wrote most of his *Anatomie d'unè image* (Paris: Terrain Vague, 1957) during the war.

Liberated in 1941, Bellmer spent the rest of the war years in the south of France, in great poverty and taking refuge for part of the time with the surrealist writer Joë Bousquet in Carcassonne. Bellmer's peripatetic journeys between Castres, Revel, Albi, and Toulouse during and after the war are marked by a correspondence with dada's "founder," Tristan Tzara.

Bellmer's second marriage (1942) saw the birth of his twin daughters, Beatrice and Doriane (whose name may be an *hommage* to Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray). The marriage was short-lived; Bellmer separated from his wife and settled in Paris in the late 1940s. At the time of his participation in the 1947 surrealist exhibition at the Galerie Maeght, Bellmer met and became involved

with the poet Nora Mitrani, who, with Gisèle Prassinos, Yves Bonnefoy, and A. Pieyre de Mandiargues, contributed texts to the first book published about Bellmer (1950). Mitrani's untimely death left incomplete her own book, *Rose au coeur violet*, which she had intended to dedicate to Bellmer.

Bellmer returned to Berlin (1953), where he met the writer Unica Zaarn, who subsequently moved to Paris with Bellmer and lived with him until her suicide (1970). Zaarn published *Hexentexte* (1954), a book of her drawings and poems, which includes an afterword by Bellmer. Zaarn served as Bellmer's model—nude and bound—for a series of photographs, one of which appeared as the cover of the magazine *Le Surréalisme même* (1957).

Jean-Jacques Pauvert exhibited at his gallery Bellmer's portraits of the artists Arp, Brauner, Duchamp, Man Ray, and Wilfredo Lam, among others (1955). Bellmer received the William and Noma Copley Foundation Prize (1958) and had a one-man exhibition at the Galerie Daniel Cordier (1963).

Although he showed regularly with the surrealists and maintained close relations with many of them, Hans Bellmer was never really part of the movement. Influenced by sources as diverse as Charles Baudelaire, Albrecht Dürer, Aubrey Beardsley, Arnold Böcklin, and Matthias Grünewald, Bellmer created work nevertheless original and varied. He died (1975) before he had a chance to see the special issue of the Parisian journal *Obliques*, which paid tribute to his life and work.

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## JACQUES-ANDRÉ BOIFFARD

(Born 1902, Epernon [Eure-et-Loir], France; died 1961, Paris)

Jacques-André Boiffard, son of a *notaire* (handler of legal documents), attended the Ecole Alsacienne in Paris, where he first met Pierre Naville, whose acquaintance he renewed when he enrolled with Naville in the Faculté des Sciences (1920) to study medicine. During a vacation the two young men read most of the poets later considered precursors of surrealism. Naville, with Francis Gérard and Boiffard, directed the review *L'Oeuf dur* (1922–24). It was Naville, who became editor of *La Révolution surréaliste* (1924) and would serve as Leon Trotsky's secretary for a time, who introduced Boiffard to André Breton. With Paul Eluard and another founding surrealist writer, Roger Vitrac, Boiffard signed the preface to the first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*. During the next few years, Boiffard, whom Breton defined in the first

*Surrealist Manifesto* (1924) as a practitioner of "absolute surrealism," contributed automatic texts, photographs, and accounts of dreams to the review.

Boiffard served as Man Ray's apprentice (1924–29), living and working for long periods at Man Ray's studio on the rue Campagne-Première. Having abandoned his medical studies at the end of 1925, Boiffard joined the Communist Party (1927). He took the photographs commissioned by André Breton to illustrate *Nadja* (1928), but by November 1928 relations between Breton and Boiffard had become strained, and Breton sent Boiffard a "letter of rupture." Boiffard assisted Jacques Prévert in writing *Un Cadavre* (1930), an attack on Breton. After the break with Breton, Boiffard collaborated with Breton's sometime adversary, the writer Georges Bataille, pub-

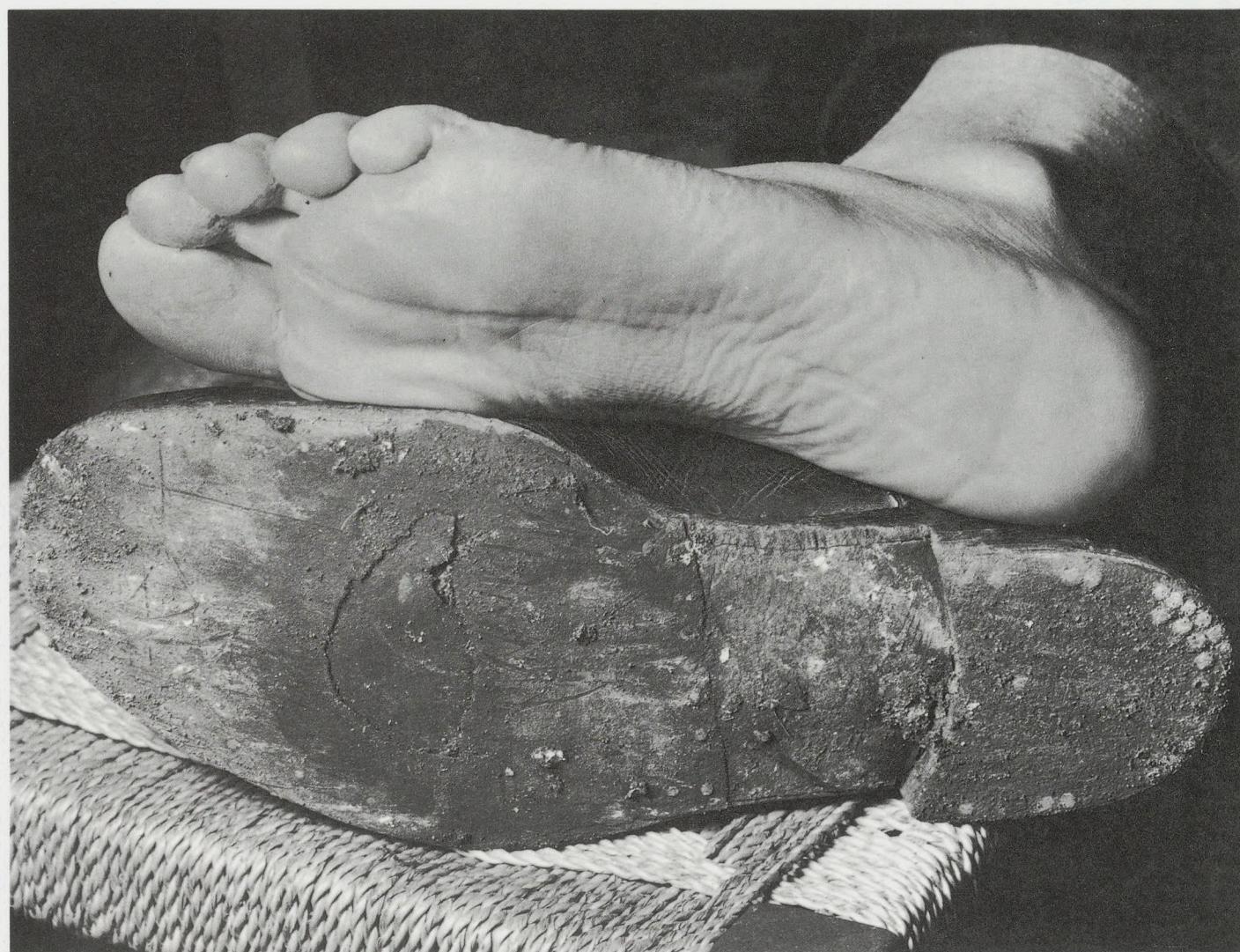


Fig. 174. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, c. 1930. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

L'AMOUR FOU

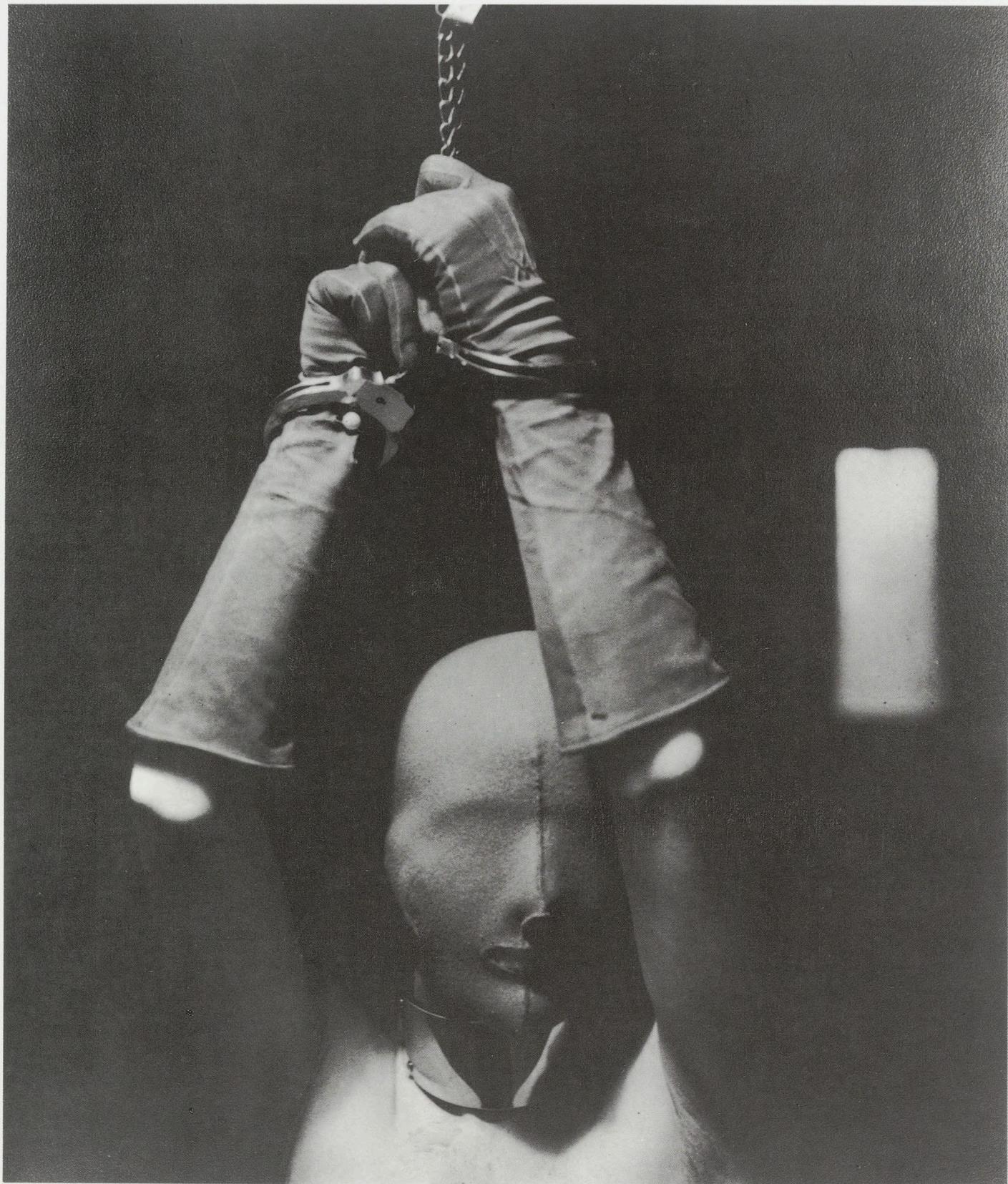


Fig. 175. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, c. 1930. J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.



Fig. 176. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1930.  
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

lishing photographs in five issues of Bataille's review, *Documents*, and taking part in the activities of the "Contre-attaque" group Bataille had organized in opposition to Breton's surrealist mainstream.

With another avant-garde photographer, Eli Lotar, Boiffard set up Studios Unis, a photography studio on the rue Froidevaux, financed by art patrons Georges-Henri Rivière and the Vicomte de Noailles (1929); it went bankrupt (1932). The American dealer Julien Levy became interested in Boiffard, buying three of his photographs (1931) and including his work in the "Surréalisme" exhibition of January of 1932 along with that of Man Ray, Roger Parry, Maurice Tabard, and others. His work was also seen in numerous group shows during the early 1930s, the annual photography exhibition at the Galerie de la Pléiade among them. Boiffard spent time in Belle-Isle as a photographer (1932) and became a member of the photo-cinema section of the Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires (1932). The following year was spent traveling, first to Moscow with the October

Group, in the company of Jacques Prévert, Yves Allégret, and other leftist artists and writers, and then around the world with Eli Lotar on the ship *Exir Dallen*. The photographs from this trip were shown at the Galerie de la Pléiade (1934).

But in 1935 Boiffard largely abandoned the avant-garde to take up his medical studies again; he was a radiologist at the Saint-Louis Hospital (1940–59). Having remained friendly with Pierre Naville, Boiffard lent him an apartment during World War II, where they worked together on Naville's writings on behavioral science.

Friend of the filmmaker Jean Painlevé, Boiffard assisted him in the creation of a film, even after he had resumed his medical career. He was Man Ray's assistant on the Prévert film, *Paris-Express (Souvenirs de Paris)*, and was the set photographer for Marcel Carné's *Les Enfants perdus* (1947).



Fig. 177. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, c. 1930.  
J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.



Fig. 178. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1930.  
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.



Fig. 179. Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1930.  
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

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**BRASSAÏ (GYULA HALASZ)**

(Born 1899, Brasso, Transylvania; died 1984, Paris)

Brassaï took his pseudonym from the city of his birth, Brasso, where his father was a professor of French literature. While studying painting at the Fine Arts Academy in Budapest (1918–19), he met Bela Bartok and the *Ma* Group run by Lajos Kassák. He attended the Berlin Hochschule Academy (1920–22), where he came into contact with Wassily Kandinsky and the group connected with the vanguard review *Der Sturm*. He also met the sculptor Jean Pougny and Oskar Kokoschka. Brassaï went to Paris (1924) and worked intermittently there as a correspondent for Hungarian and German newspapers. During this period he met most of the important figures of the Parisian avant-garde in literature and the arts: Georges Bataille, Maurice Raynal, André Masson, Raymond Queneau, Michel Leiris, Tristan Tzara, Robert Desnos, Le Corbusier, Henri Laurens, to name a few.

By 1930 Brassaï's attention turned to photography. He sought advice from his fellow countryman André Kertész, with whom he collaborated on magazine articles, but

Brassaï later tended to minimize Kertész's influence on his work. Setting out to photograph Paris at night, he produced *Paris de nuit* (1933), with text by Paul Morand, which met with considerable success.

In the early 1930s Brassaï's circle expanded to include Picasso, Breton, Eluard, Dali, Giacometti, the publisher Albert Skira, the poet Benjamin Péret, the scriptwriter and poet Jacques Prévert, and others. He worked for several reviews, including *Minotaure*, *Verve*, *Labyrinthe*, and he began to photograph French artists in their studios. Until the advent of Dora Maar in Picasso's life, Brassaï served as the unofficial photographer of the master's works. Through his work for *Minotaure*, Brassaï became close to the surrealist group, but he objected to the surrealists' lack of objectivity; he felt that his images, in precise contrast, expressed objectivity. When Breton invited Brassaï to join his group, then, the photographer declined but remained friendly with many of surrealists, including Man Ray and Dali.

During the German Occupation of France, Brassaï started to draw. After the war, he published his surrealist poem *Histoire de Marie* (1949), with a preface by Henry Miller. His photographic series of *Graffiti*, initiated in

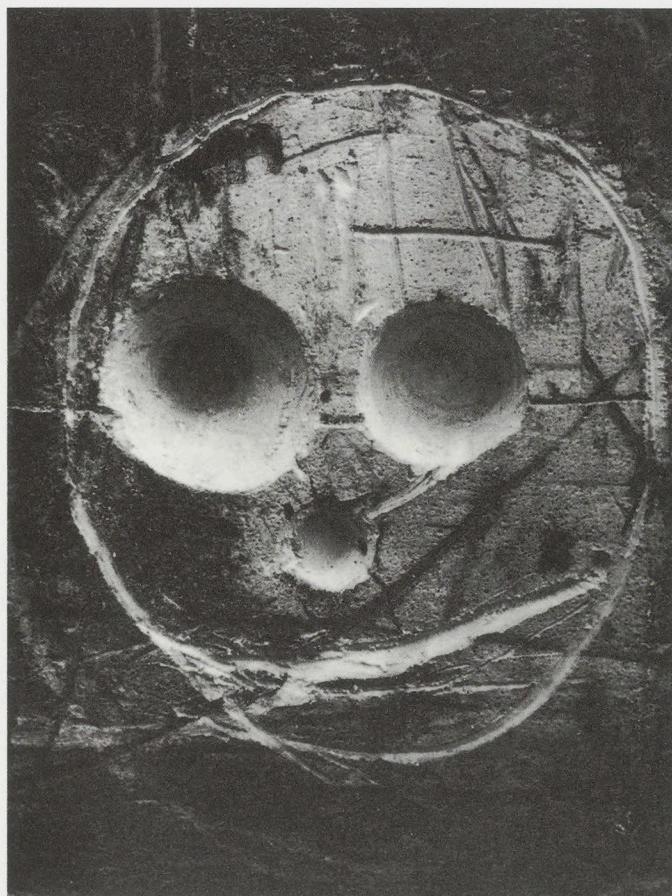


Fig. 180. Brassaï, *Graffiti*, 1934. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

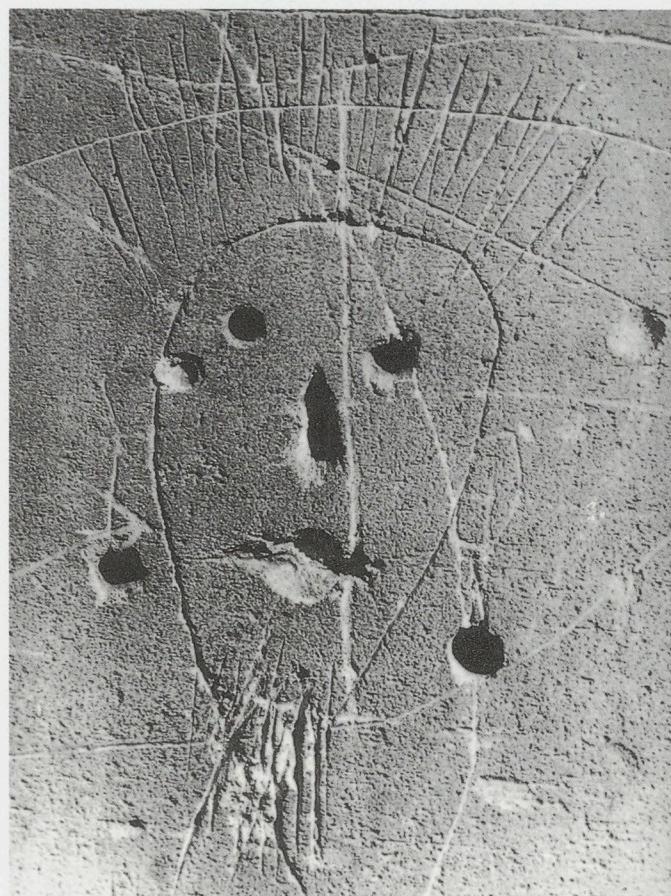


Fig. 181. Brassaï, *Graffiti*, 1933. Collection Rosabianca Skira, Geneva.

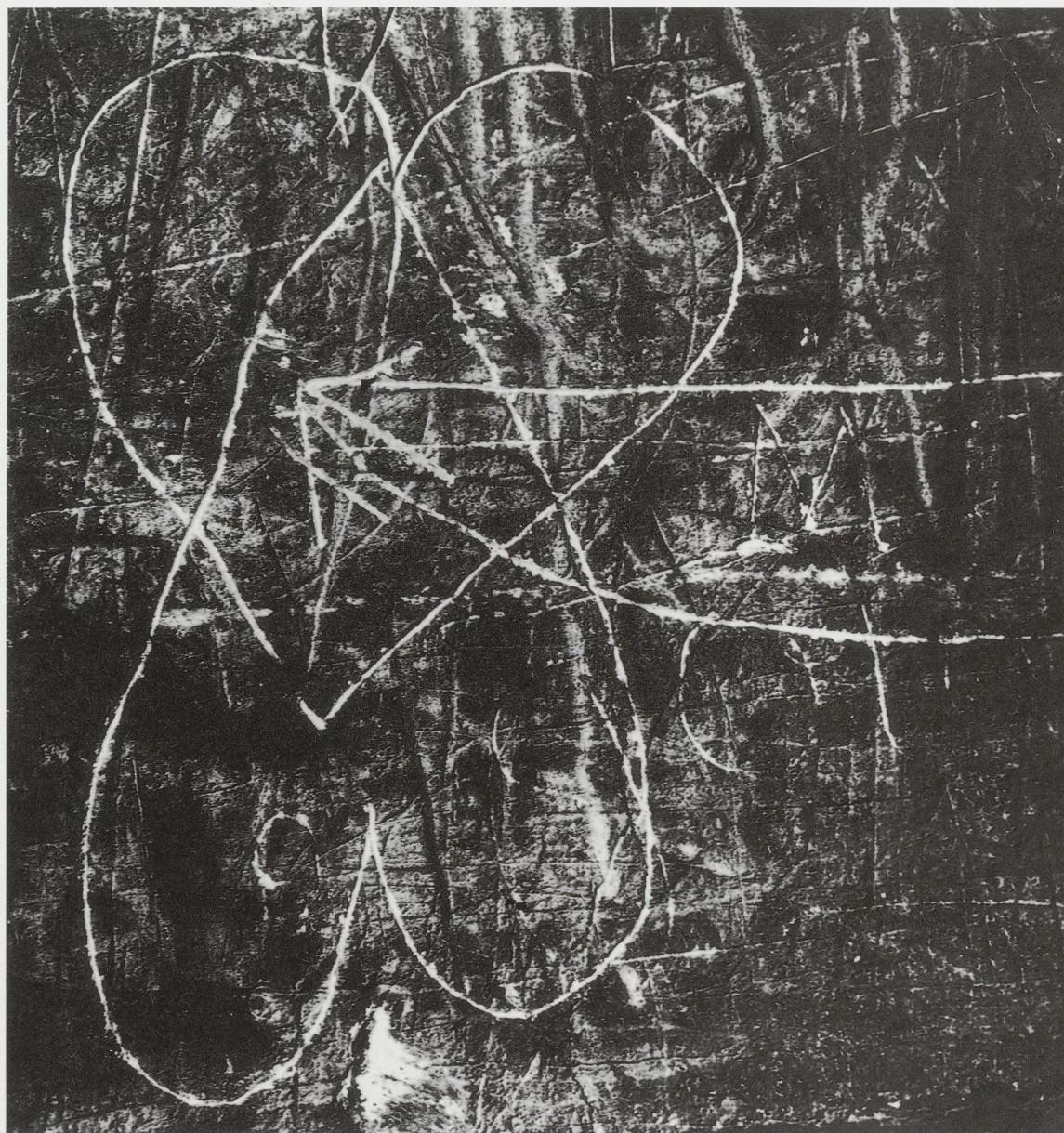


Fig. 182. Brassaï, *Graffiti*, (1930). Collection Gérard Levy, Paris.

1933, was continued in earnest during the 1950s. Brassaï created four different stage sets using photography (1945–50). His film *Tant qu'il y aura des bêtes* (1956) won a prize at the Cannes film festival. In 1957 he went to the United States for the first time and started experimenting with color photography.

Brassaï wrote a great number of articles and a book (about Picasso). He has appeared in over 200 exhibitions in France and elsewhere; in later years, he took up painting and sculpture. Henry Miller pronounced him the “eye of Paris.”

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## ANDRÉ BRETON

(Born 1896, Tinchebray-sur-Orne, France; died 1966, Paris)

André Breton, poet, founder of the surrealist movement, major artistic and literary figure of the twentieth century, came from a provincial family of modest means. He spent his childhood and youth in the Parisian suburb of Pantin and, later, in Paris. There he attended the Lycée Chaptal (1906–12) and developed a passion for poetry and philosophy.

While he decided early on to pursue a medical career, his interest in modern literature brought him into contact with such figures such as Paul Valéry and Guillaume Apollinaire, who would exercise substantial influence on the young poet. In the second year of World War I, Breton served in the hospital at Nantes, where one patient he met, the subversive, anarchic Jacques Vaché, encouraged the young man's poetic inclinations and, it would appear, opened his eyes to the value of humor. Breton's discovery of Rimbaud at this time further enlarged his literary scope, which a little later was to be enhanced again by contact with the work of the nineteenth-century proto-surrealist writer, Lautréamont.

Perhaps an even more decisive formative influence was Breton's work in the psychiatric wards at Saint-Dizier and at Val-de-Grâce hospitals (Paris). There Breton read Freud's theories dealing with the unconscious (in lengthy French summaries, which were being published at the time). Through hospital patients, he was exposed to the phenomena of "nondirected" thought and language, which led him to attempt a philosophical interpretation of the latter. At the Val-de-Grâce hospital, Breton met Louis Aragon, also at the time a medical student turned poet, and, through him, Philippe Soupault, with whom Breton "invented" automatic writing, and with whom he collaborated to produce the book of automatic poetry, *Les Champs magnétiques* (1920). Breton founded the review *Littérature* (1919) and became an active dadaist the next year, following Tristan Tzara's arrival in Paris.

The beginning of the 1920s saw several critical changes and challenges for Breton, which culminated in his founding of the surrealist movement, setting forth its principles in the *Manifeste du surréalisme* (the first *Surrealist Manifesto*; 1924). His numerous literary and psychiatric influences were enriched by his knowledge of the work of major artists, including Picasso, Duchamp, and Giorgio de Chirico, and by his discovery of Oceanic art. From this epoch to the end of his life, Breton's dedication to the surrealist movement was all-encompassing. As editor of the review *La Révolution surréaliste*,



Fig. 183. André Breton, *Le Serpent*, c. 1936.  
Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan.

he shaped the movement. His revolutionary commitment, whether political or social, was marked by the rejection of traditional values of family, country, and accepted social mores. He was sometimes led into political involvements, as in his relationship with the French Communist party.

Breton published his second *Surrealist Manifesto* in 1929, at about the time that his marriage to Simone Collinet ended. (He subsequently married Jacqueline Lamba [1934] and Elisa [1943].) By this period, surrealism had taken on an international character, and Breton served as cultural emissary, traveling and lecturing extensively. One of the most significant of his trips took him to Mexico, where, at the home of Diego Rivera, he saw the painter's new work in the service of Socialist Realism. (Rivera had lived in Paris during the early 1920s, when he painted in a Cubist manner.) Breton also discovered the work of Rivera's wife, Frida Kahlo, whose

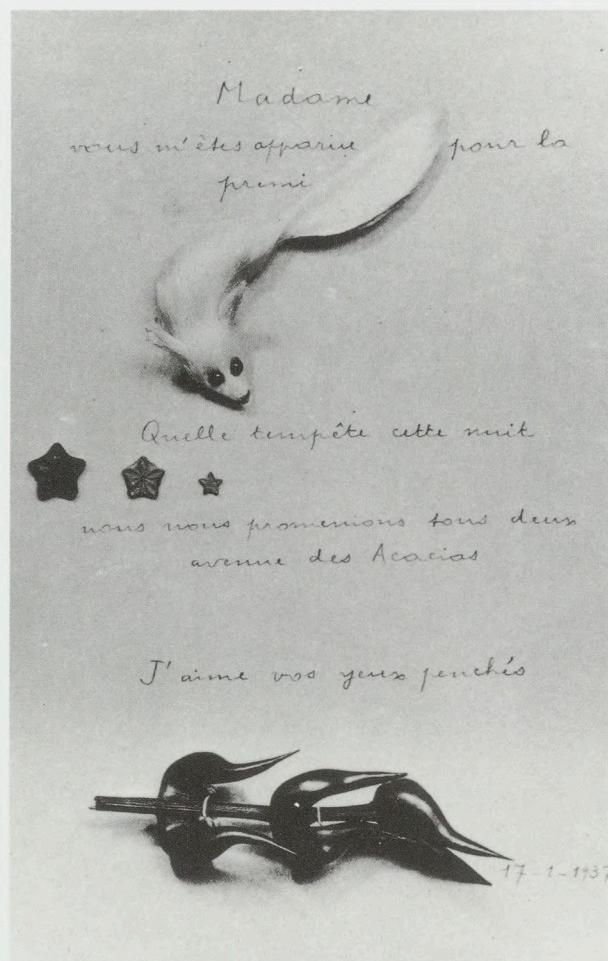


Fig. 184. André Breton, *Objet-poème*, 1937.  
Collection Gérard Levy, Paris.

painting he enthusiastically endorsed. And he met Leon Trotsky, with whom he wrote an appeal to "revolutionary, independent artists."

In the 1930s Breton helped to establish the general aesthetic outline for the review *Minotaure*, which was mainly devoted to subjects dealing with dreams, "humour noir," and the importance of the object.

Breton was mobilized during World War II as a doctor in Poitiers. At the time of the French armistice with Germany, he was in the free zone, from which he made his way to New York via Marseille and the West Indies. In New York, Breton found work as a radio announcer for broadcasts in French. During his American exile he continued to write poetry, helped organize exhibitions, contributed to such reviews as the American surrealist journal *VVV*, visited Hopi and Navajo Indian reservations, and generally served as a focal point for exiled surrealists and their sympathizers. Upon his return to Paris (1946), he faced opposition from certain artists and writers, who criticized his having escaped to the United States. In spite of the criticism, Breton continued to devote his

time to surrealist activities, notably organizing the important International Surrealist Exhibition at the Galerie Maeght (1947). He kept the movement alive during the 1950s through literary and commercial channels. He set up the Galerie de l'Etoile Scellée, which exhibited both new recruits as well as longtime surrealists. He also helped to establish six different reviews, most of them short-lived, which served to propagate surrealist thought. The new generation of surrealist painters, such as Toyen and Wolfgang Paalen, were promoted alongside such contemporary nonsurrealists as Jean Degottex and Simon Hantaï, whose abstract compositions intrigued Breton by their affinity with the Orient and mysticism. Until his death from an asthma attack (1966), Breton remained active in the political arena as well as in artistic circles.

Breton first came into contact with photography at Max Ernst's exhibition "Fatagaga" (1922), in which he discovered a link between photography and the phenomena of automatism in which he was so deeply interested. He considered photography and cinema important mediums of expression that should not be subordinated to other art forms. In fact, he chose to have several of his publications abundantly "illustrated" with photographs, *Nadja*, *Les Vases communicants*, *L'Amour fou*, and others. For Breton, photography had a "valeur émotive," which made it "one of the most precious objects of exchange," and he advocated illustrating books with photographs rather than drawings. Nevertheless, he stressed that photography is not a means for obtaining a faithful likeness of a fleeting moment. It is subject to manipulations; the elements of a photograph could be combined to express a new reality. Breton was equally fascinated by the cinema. With virtues related to those of photography, the cinema incorporated an added dimension, movement. He articulated his appreciation of these art forms in *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (originally serialized in *La Révolution surréaliste*; collected as a book, 1965), as part of a discussion of Man Ray, Max Ernst, Raoul Ubac, Marcel Duchamp, and others. Breton's own collages sometimes used photographic material exclusively, as if to emphasize the stature he accorded this medium.

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Fig. 185. Claude Cahun, *Untitled*, c. 1929.  
Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.



Fig. 186. Claude Cahun, *Untitled*, c. 1936.  
Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

### CLAUDE CAHUN

(Date and place of birth and death unknown)

Although little is known about Claude Cahun, she has left behind two publications—one literary, the other photographic—that help keep her name from total oblivion. A leftist activist, she was associated with the surrealists during the 1930s. Apparently, some of the meetings of the radical surrealist group, “*Contre-attaque*,” took place in her Paris apartment, and, with other revolutionary surrealists, she signed several political texts. She published *Aveux non avenus* (Paris: Editions du Carrefour, 1930) and illustrated Lise Deharme’s book of poems *Le Coeur de pic* (1937) with her photographs. Her Jewish origins and leftist political activities resulted in Cahun’s deportation during World War II. She died in a concentration camp.



Fig. 187. Claude Cahun, *Untitled*, c. 1929.  
Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

**SALVADOR DALI**

(Born 1904, Figueras, Spain; presently lives in Cadaquès, Spain)

Named after his mother's first child, who had died before reaching his second birthday, Salvador Dali showed an interest in art as early as age six, when he made his first painting. Also at an early age he was introduced by the painter Ramon Pichot, a friend of Picasso and of the Dali family, to the work of the Impressionists.

Dali enrolled in the School of Fine Arts in Madrid (1921). His exposure to the "metaphysical" painting of Giorgio de Chirico and Carlo Carrà (1923) influenced his nascent style, which was Cubist. This prompted his revolt against the academic training offered at the School of Fine Arts and, together with his generally subversive behavior, caused his suspension and eventual expulsion (1926). During this period, he had two one-man shows at the Dalmau Gallery in Barcelona and a group show in Madrid.

In the year of his expulsion, Dali traveled to Paris, where he met Picasso and, later, Miró. He also established friendships with the filmmaker Luis Buñuel and the poet García Lorca. They collaborated on several projects, including a Lorca play for which Dali designed sets and costumes. He worked with Buñuel on his seminal surrealist film, *Un Chien andalou* (1929). Through Miró, Dali came into contact with such surrealists as Jean Arp, the art dealer Camille Goemans, Magritte, and Paul Eluard. The scenario of *Un Chien andalou* appeared in *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 12, amid public clamor. Buñuel's *L'Age d'or* (1930), with Dali's script, was censored.

Soon after Dali's acceptance into the surrealist group, he met Gala Eluard, who was eventually to become his companion and, later, his wife. Dali's first one-man show in Paris was held at the Galerie Camille Goemans. The catalogue's preface by André Breton signaled the leader's approval of Dali's entry into the surrealist group. His total commitment to the surrealists led him actively to publish in such journals as *Le Surrealisme au service de la révolution* and *Minotaure*.

During the 1930s Dali developed his "paranoid-critical method," a process by which he deliberately induced

psychotic hallucinatory states in himself for exploitation in his art and life. This practice caught the attention of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who subsequently visited Dali, whereupon Dali further developed his theory in an essay (published in *Minotaure*, 1933), exploring his obsession with Millet's painting *The Angelus*. Works based on *The Angelus* were shown at the Galerie Pierre Colle (1933). Some of these were sent to the Julien Levy Gallery in New York as part of Dali's first one-man show in the United States.

The artist exhibited regularly throughout the 1930s, and, visiting the United States for the first time (1934), he became the spokesman-promoter of the surrealist movement there (and of his personal theories). Breton expelled Dali from the surrealist group because of the painter's exploitation of surrealism for commercial gain (1940). Dali's first retrospective was held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1941), and he subsequently published his autobiographical *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali* (1942–44).

Dali's works are, in his own words, "hand-painted photographs" that often deal obsessively with death and fantasy. His esteem for French nineteenth-century genre painters is due to their precision in depicting reality. He also held Vermeer, Velázquez, and the Pre-Raphaelites in high regard. His interest in all types of photography can be seen in photomontages such as *Le Phénomène de l'extase* (1933), in which he used photographic details of a building by the Spanish architect and visionary Antoni Gaudí, photographs from a criminological work by Alphonse Bertillon, and bits of photographs by Brassaï. He also used photography extensively to illustrate his books and his articles.

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Fig. 188. Salvador Dali and Horst P. Horst, *Costume Design for "The Dream of Venus,"* 1939. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

## MARCEL DUCHAMP

(Born 1887, Blainville, France; died 1968, Neuilly, France)

Marcel Duchamp came from a large family, several of whose members were involved in the arts. By 1910 he was part of the important group called Section d'Or, formed in the Paris suburb of Puteaux, which included his two brothers, Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Apollinaire, the Czech painter Frank Kupka, the French painter and theorist Albert Gleizes, and others. During this period he was befriended by Francis Picabia.

Duchamp's epoch-making *Nude Descending a Staircase* was refused by the Salon des Indépendants (1912) but received an enthusiastic reception when exhibited at the Armory Show in New York (1913). That same year Duchamp moved to Paris and found employment at the Sainte-Geneviève Library. He left France for New York (1915), where he renewed his friendship with Picabia and became the protégé of the important collectors Louise and Walter Arensberg, who introduced him to the New York vanguard. He also met Man Ray and "created" the first of his celebrated found-art pieces, or "ready-mades."

With Henri-Pierre Roché he founded two reviews, *The Blindman* and *Rongwrong* (1917). After returning briefly to France (1919) he returned to New York (1920), where he worked with Man Ray on his first "optical machine," a sculpture with rotary disks. At this time he invented Rrose Sélavy, an alter-ego for which Duchamp was dressed as a woman and photographed. With Katherine Dreier and Man Ray he founded the Société Anonyme, an organization meant to bring avant-garde art before the American public. With Man Ray he published the sole issue of *New York Dada* (1921). He returned to France (1921), where he became associated with André Breton and his *Littérature* group. Duchamp returned to New York where he worked toward finishing his "Large Glass," *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, on which he had been working for the preceding eight years. Abandoning this, he once again set out for Paris (1923), declaring that he had given up painting for good. In Paris he met Mary Reynolds, with whom he had a long liaison. He continued his research on optical machines, made the film *Anemic Cinéma* (1926), played chess incessantly, and appeared in *Entr'acte*, a film by René Clair and Francis Picabia, with music by Erik Satie.

Duchamp published his *Boîte verte* in 1934, the date that marks the beginning of his surrealist period. In the

next few years he participated in several major surrealist exhibitions: the London International Surrealist exhibition (1936); "Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism" at the Museum of Modern Art (1936); and a one-man show at the Chicago Arts Club (1937). He took up full-time residence in the United States (1942), where he worked on the surrealist review *VVV* and participated in the exhibition, "First Papers of Surrealism." He designed the cover for the March 1945 issue of *View*, a number devoted entirely to him. He organized part of the International Surrealist show at the Galerie Maeght (1947), and he published his notes on the artists belonging to the Société Anonyme (1950).

In the 1950s Duchamp married Alexina Sattler (called Teeny), became an American citizen (1955), and was the guest of honor at Daniel Cordier's International Surrealism show in Paris (1959). His first important retrospective, at the Pasadena Art Museum (1963), was followed by an *hommage* at the Schwarz Gallery, Milan (1964).

Duchamp's interest in photography began when he first encountered Etienne Jules Marey's late nineteenth-century experiments with the photography of motion. The overlapping geometrical forms that represent human motion in such works as *Nude Descending a Staircase* can be directly traced to Marey. Duchamp probably became familiar with this source through his brother Raymond, who had interned at a Paris hospital with Marey's brother, Albert Londe (1894). Much of Duchamp's work is deeply involved with photography, although Man Ray served as the actual "operator" for many of his photographic artworks.

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## NUSCH ELUARD

(Born 1906, Germany; Died 1946, France)

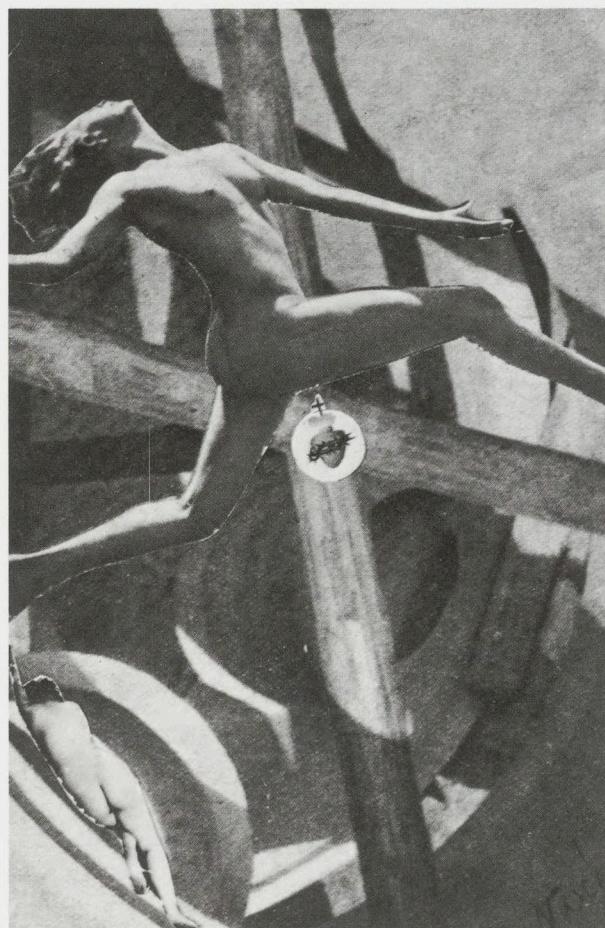
As a young actress in Berlin, Maria Benz took "Nusch" as a stage name. In the late 1920s she came to Paris where she met Paul Eluard whom she married in the early 1930s. She became one of Picasso's favorite models in the 1930s and 1940s, and was also frequently used as a model by Man Ray. Eluard's cycle of poetry dedicated to her, *Facile* (1936), is illustrated with photographs of her by Man Ray. In the mid 1930s, as a pastime, she produced a single body of photo collage work.



Above: Fig. 189. Nusch Eluard, *Untitled*, c. 1936. Collection Timothy Baum, New York.

Upper right: Fig. 190. Nusch Eluard, *Untitled*, c. 1936. Collection Timothy Baum, New York.

Lower right: Fig. 191. Nusch Eluard, *Untitled*, c. 1936. Collection Timothy Baum, New York.



## MAX ERNST

(Born 1891, Brühl, Germany; died 1976, Paris)

Ernst's father, a schoolteacher and painter, introduced his son to painting at an early age. Ernst studied philosophy and art history at the University of Bonn (1909–12). His friendship with August Macke and his visit to the important Sonderbund show in Cologne, where he was able to view works by Cézanne, Munch, Picasso, and others, encouraged Ernst to abandon his university studies for artistic pursuits. He met Apollinaire and Robert Delaunay, made his first trip to Paris, and exhibited in the Herbst-Salon (Berlin) alongside Macke, Kandinsky, Delaunay, and Klee (1913). At the outbreak of World War I, he met Jean Arp and was mobilized as an artillery engineer (1914). After the war, he returned to Cologne and married Louise Strauss (1918). In Munich he discovered the work of Giorgio de Chirico in the Italian art journal *Valori Plastici*, and started to contribute to the Cologne dada movement, producing his first collages with fellow dadaist Johannes Theodor Baargeld (1920). Ernst's son Jimmy was born in 1920 and that same year Ernst collaborated with Arp on the Fatagaga collages, making as well a series of photo collages. At Breton's request, he exhibited his collages in Paris (1921). Ernst met Paul Eluard (1921) and collaborated with him to produce *Le Malheur des immortels* and *Répétitions* (1922; poems by Eluard and collages by Ernst). Ernst settled in Paris in 1922.

In the early 1920s Ernst completed several of what are now considered seminal surrealist works, including *The Elephant of the Celebes* and *Oedipus Rex*. He began experimenting with "frottages" (1925), works made by taking rubbings of the grain of various objects and thereby obtaining chance patterns and images. Several were published as *Histoire naturelle* (1926). He was married for the second time to Marie-Berthe Aurenche (1927) and published a collage novel, *La Femme 100 têtes* (1929). During the 1930s Ernst published another collage novel, *Une Semaine de bonté* (1934), took part in the now-historic show Alfred Barr organized at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, "Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism," with forty paintings, almost twice the number exhibited by the other artists represented. *Beyond Painting*, Ernst's artistic autobiography, appeared in 1936, and he left the surrealist group (1938).

Ernst lived with Leonora Carrington in the south of France until the war broke out, when he was interned as a German citizen at the Mille prison camp (with Hans Bellmer). After liberation from the camp, Ernst fled to the United States, where he married and divorced Peggy

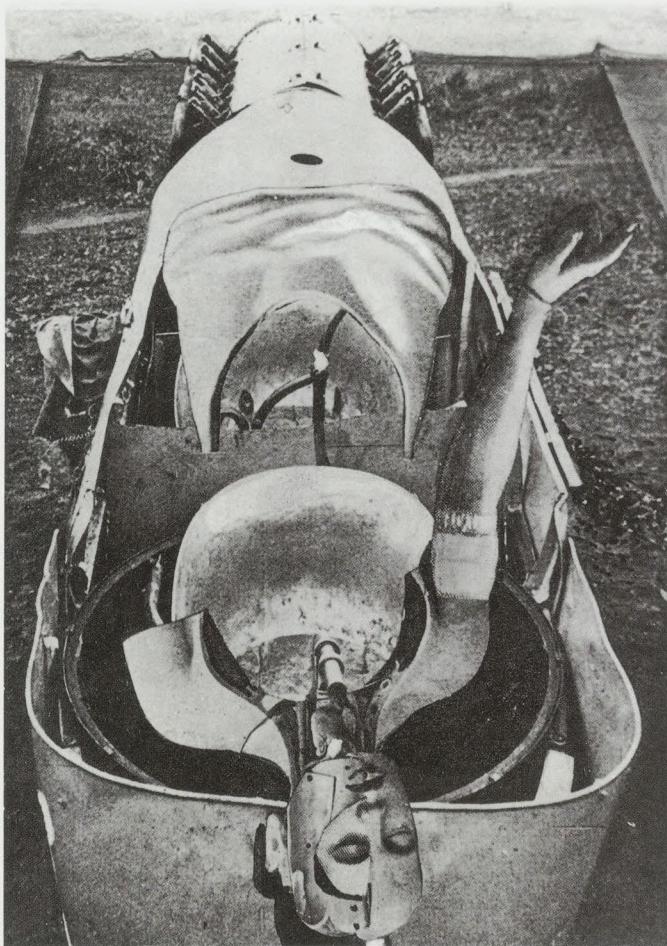


Fig. 192. Max Ernst, *Anatomy of a Bride* (*Anatomie d'un mariée*), c. 1921. Collection Jean-Jacques Lebel, Paris.

Fig. 193. Max Ernst, *Sambesiland*, c. 1921. Private collection.

Guggenheim (1941), directed the American surrealist review *VVV* with Breton, Duchamp, and David Hare (1942–44), and married Dorothea Tanning (1946), with whom he lived for several years in Sedona, Arizona.

The artist's first postwar retrospective took place in Paris at the Galerie Drouin (1950), followed by another in Basel (1951). He won the Grand Prize for painting at the 1954 Venice Biennale and became a French citizen (1958). From the 1950s on, Ernst had numerous shows, retrospectives, and received many awards.

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Fig. 194. Max Ernst, *The Cormorants*, 1920. Private collection.

## GEORGES HUGNET

(Born 1906, Paris; died 1974, Saint-Martin-de-Ré, France)

French-born Georges Hugnet spent his early childhood in Buenos Aires, where his father founded a branch office of the family's furniture business. The family returned to France in 1913. Through Marcel Jouhandeau, Hugnet met Max Jacob, who was impressed with the sixteen-year-old's poetry and later illustrated his first book, a collection called *40 Poésies de Stanislas Bouteiller* (1928). Jacob's circle of friends, which included Cocteau, Picasso, Robert Desnos, Duchamp, Picabia, Man Ray, Tristan Tzara, Miró, and Ernst, became available to the young Hugnet. Around 1926 he began to draw in a surrealist style, and at about the same time he became a friend of the American composer Virgil Thomson, who subsequently took him to the home of Gertrude Stein. After establishing a friendship with her, Hugnet executed the French translation of two of her books, *The Making of Americans* (1929) and *Ten Portraits* (1930).

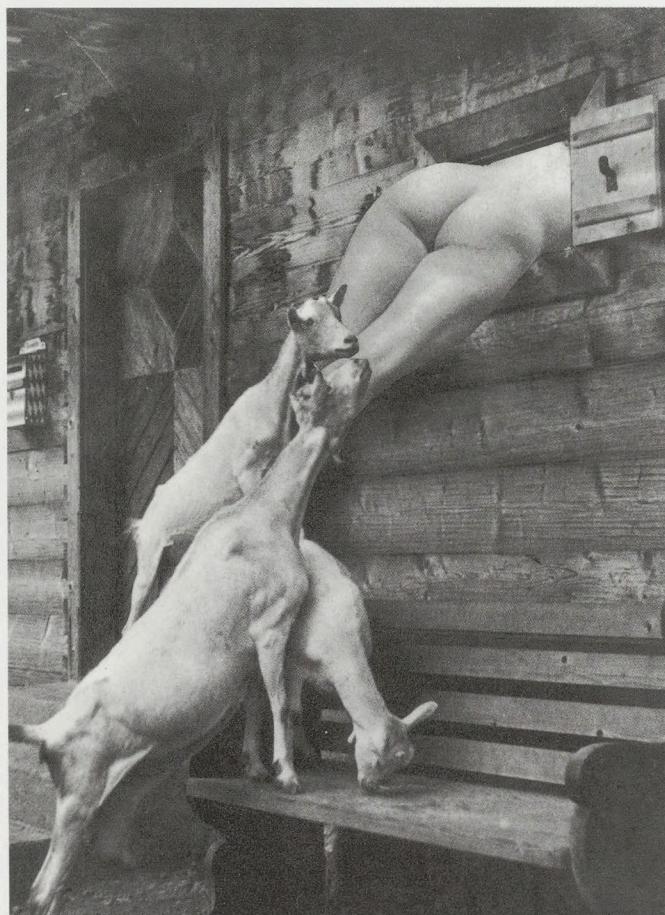


Fig. 195. Georges Hugnet, *The Magnificent Estate at Trebaumec* (*Le Magnifique domaine de Trebaumec*; for *Huit Jours à Trebaumec*), 1947. Zabriskie Gallery, Paris and New York.



Fig. 196. Georges Hugnet, *The Following Thursday (Le Jeudi suivant; for Huit Jours à Trebaumec)*, 1947. Zabriskie Gallery, Paris and New York.

Hugnet joined Virgil Thomson in several "concert-recitals" (1928). He wrote the script for the film *La Perle* (1929), directed by Henri d'Arche, in which he also played a main role. He founded the publishing house, La Montagne (1929), which issued Tzara's *L'Arbre des voyageurs* and, in translation, Gertrude Stein's books.

During the next few years (1932–36) Hugnet wrote several articles on the dada movement. They appeared as "L'Esprit dada dans la peinture" (*Cahiers d'art*, nos. 1–2, 6–7, 8–10 [1932]; nos. 1–4 [1934]; nos. 8–10 [1936]), later to be collected under the title "L'Aventure dada" (no. 128). On the basis of this work, André Breton contacted Hugnet through Tzara, and he joined the surrealists (1932), contributing articles to *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* and *Cahiers d'art*, signing surrealist tracts, publishing his poem *Onan* with Editions Surréalistes, and writing a preface to the first *Petite Anthologie poétique du surréalisme*. He befriended the Italian painter Alberto Magnelli (1934), and he opened a bookbinding studio (1934–40). The surrealist poet Benjamin Péret wrote of Hugnet's work as a book-object maker in *Minotaure*, no. 10 (1937).

From 1934 on Hugnet made assemblages, collages, poèmes-découpages, and décalcomanies, a technique of transferring a painted image from one surface to another,



Fig. 197. Georges Hugnet, *Untitled*, 1936. Collection Timothy Baum, New York.

thereby eliciting chance patterns. *La Septième face du dé*, a book of his poèmes-découpages, was published in 1936 with a photographic cover designed by Marcel Duchamp. That same year Hugnet wrote the preface to the celebrated Museum of Modern Art exhibition organized by Alfred Barr, "Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism."

After breaking with Breton, Hugnet founded the magazine *L'Usage de la parole*, which survived for only three issues (1939–40), its publication interrupted by the war. After marrying Germaine Pied, Hugnet opened a bookshop in the same building as the Galerie Jeanne Bucher (1940). During the war Hugnet contributed articles to several underground reviews under the nom de guerre "Malo le Bleu" (reflecting his mother's Breton origins), and his bookshop was used as a warehouse for false-identity papers. During this time he saw a great deal of Picasso and Eluard and participated in the clandestine publication of *L'Honneur des poètes*.

He married Myrtille Hubert (1950), who bore him a son, Nicolas (1951). He exhibited his graphics, objects, and collages at the Galerie de l'Institut, Galerie Fursten-

berg, and elsewhere and furthered his work on the history of the dada movement by composing a dada dictionary, which his wife completed several years after his death. He produced graphic work and designed book covers until his death. *Pleins et déliés* (1972) is a collection of his writings from 1926 to 1972.

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Fig. 198. Georges Hugnet, *Untitled*, 1936. Collection Timothy Baum, New York.

## ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ

(Born 1894, Budapest; lives in New York)

André Kertész, destined by his family to become a banker, received his degree in business administration from Budapest's Academy of Commerce (1912). He began work at the Budapest stock exchange (1912) and bought his first camera (an ICA 4.5 x 6 cm), with which he photographed his city. He served as a photographer in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I and was wounded (1915). Most of the negatives from this period were destroyed during the Hungarian revolution (1918).

He decided to go to Paris (1925) to seek the artistic stimulus lacking in Budapest and to make his living solely from photography. Free-lancing for several major European newspapers (1925–28), he had his first one-man show in Paris at the vanguard Galerie Le Sacre du Printemps (1928). Enthusiastically accepted by the Parisian avant-garde, Kertész was invited to show in the first Salon Indépendant de la Photographie (1928). He became part of the staff of *Vu* and married Rogi André, a fellow Hungarian artist (1928).

Kertész is said to have taught photography to Brassaï (an assertion Brassaï himself contests). Kertész worked with Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes for the review *Bifur* and was close to the surrealist milieu without being an official member of the movement. He was warmly accepted in Montparnasse artistic circles. His friends included Mondrian, Léger, Chagall, Calder, in addition to the photographers Germaine Krull, Eli Lotar, Roger Parry, Maurice Tabard, and others. By 1929 he began to draw attention from museums, which bought work for their collections. He was included in Julien Levy's exhibition "Modern European Photographers" (1932). Divorcing Rogi André, he married Elizabeth Sali (1933), and left for New York (1936), where he worked for the Keystone picture agency.

The outbreak of World War II prevented Kertész's return to France, so, during the war years he free-lanced for major American magazines. He published *Day of Paris* (1945) and had his first American one-man show at the Chicago Art Institute (1946). He was under exclusive contract with the Condé Nast magazine group (1949–62).

Somewhat forgotten in the 1950s, Kertész did have several retrospectives starting in the 1960s, including a show at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (1963), at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1964), and at Stockholm's Moderna Museet (1971). Kertész's first photographic distortions date from August 1917, when he photographed *Swimmer Under Water* in Hungary, the negative for which survived the destruction of his other



Fig. 199. André Kertész, *Distortion #11*, 1933. Pace-MacGill Gallery, New York.

Hungarian-period images. In the 1920s he pursued this technique, photographing several "distorted" heads (1927), only one example of which has survived. He also worked with a deforming mirror (1933); these images, for many years considered lost because of oxidation damage to the negatives, have been restored. They were published in *Distortions* (1976).

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**DORA MAAR (DORA MARŠKOVIC)**

(Born 1909, Tours; lives in Paris and the south of France)

Dora Maar, a painter and photographer, is the daughter of a French mother and Yugoslavian father, an architect, with whom she lived for many years in Argentina before coming to France. She briefly participated in the surrealist movement with her photographs (1934). Friend of the filmmaker Louis Chavance, she knew the photographer Brassaï from about 1930 on. According to Brassaï, he and Dora Maar used the same darkroom for a brief period and exhibited together.

Paul Eluard introduced her to Picasso at the Café Deux Magots (1935). She became Picasso's companion for several years, served as the model for *La Femme qui pleure* (1937) and for *Guernica* (1937). She is said to have influenced Picasso in the field of photography; however, Brassaï maintains (in *Conversations with Picasso*) that Picasso had already experimented with photographic etchings well before the series realized in collaboration with Dora Maar (1937; published in *Cahiers d'art*). She virtually supplanted Brassaï as Picasso's unofficial photographer during her relationship with him. She photographed the successive states of *Guernica* in addition to many of his sculptures. Her collaboration with Picasso, as well as such works as Paul Eluard's poem "Identités" (1938)—written for her—and Man Ray's famous photographic portrait of her (1936) together with the photographs she and Man Ray made to illustrate *Le Temps déborde* (1947)—poems by "Didier Desroches" (alias Eluard)—all can be cited as proof of the active artistic exchanges among these friends.

Although her participation in the surrealist movement was sporadic and relatively unprolific, she nevertheless produced some of the most striking surrealist images. In addition to her *Portrait d'Ubu* (1936), she contributed a photomontage, *29 rue d'Astorg*, to the surrealist postcard campaign, published in 1937.

Gradually giving up photography for painting, she had several exhibitions (1944–58). She exhibited at Galerie Jeanne Bucher (1944), at Galerie Pierre (1946), and at Berggruen (1957), where she showed landscapes Douglas Cooper described (in the exhibition catalogue) as manifesting "direct inspiration from nature with relationship to Turner and Courbet." What will probably prove to be her last exhibition was at the Leicester Galleries, London (1958). She has for many years lived in the south of France, in Ménerbes, far removed from artistic circles.

(Dora Maar has declined permission to reproduce her photographs in this book.)

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## RENÉ MAGRITTE

(Born 1898, Lessines, Belgium; died 1967, Brussels)

Magritte's troubled family moved frequently during the artist's youth: to Charleroi, and finally to Brussels (1918). In Chatelet, Magritte's mother drowned herself in the Sambre (1912). Her body was taken out of the river with her nightgown wrapped around her head, an image that figured later in Magritte's work (for example, in *Les Amants*).

Magritte studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels (1916–18). He was introduced to Cubism and Futurism by Pierre-Louis Floquet, with whom he shared a studio (1919–20). Floquet presented him to the Antwerp avant-garde. He first exhibited his paintings at the Brussels Centre d'Art (1920).

In 1920 he became acquainted with the important Dutch modernist ideas of De Stijl, met E. L. T. Mesens (who had been hired as the piano teacher for his younger brother, Paul), and once again encountered Georgette Berger, whom he had first met in 1913, at a fair. The second meeting led to their marriage two years later. Magritte began married life as a designer of wallpaper; then he turned to posters and advertisements.

Francis Picabia published Magritte's "Aphorisms" in the journal *391*, and the same year Magritte met two of the founders of the surrealist review *Correspondance*, Camille Goemans and Marcel Lecomte (1924). Between November 1924 and September 1926 there were two surrealist groups in Belgium. The first was composed of Magritte and E. L. T. Mesens, whose dadaist review, *Oesophage*, had a short life of one issue (March 1925). At about this time Magritte discovered the work of Giorgio de Chirico, Lecomte introduced him to French surrealist poetry, and he met Paul Nougé. Magritte worked with Mesens on the review *Marie* (1926) and painted his first "surrealist" painting, *Le Jockey perdu* (1926). His first one-man show was held at the Galerie Le Centaure (1927), followed by a second one at Mesens's gallery, L'Epoque (1928). Nougé (text) and Magritte (drawings) collaborated on a book, *Quelques Écrits et quelques dessins de Clarisse Juraville* (1927). The Magrittes moved to the Parisian suburb of Perreux-sur-Marne and divided their time between Paris and Belgium (1927). They became friends with Eluard, Breton, Miró, Arp, and many others. The artist contributed to Nougé's review, *Distances*, and took part in the "Exposition surréaliste" at Camille Goemans's gallery (1928). The Magrittes vacationed in Cadaques, visiting Dalí in the company of Goemans and the Eluards (1929).

Magritte joined the Belgian Communist party (1932).

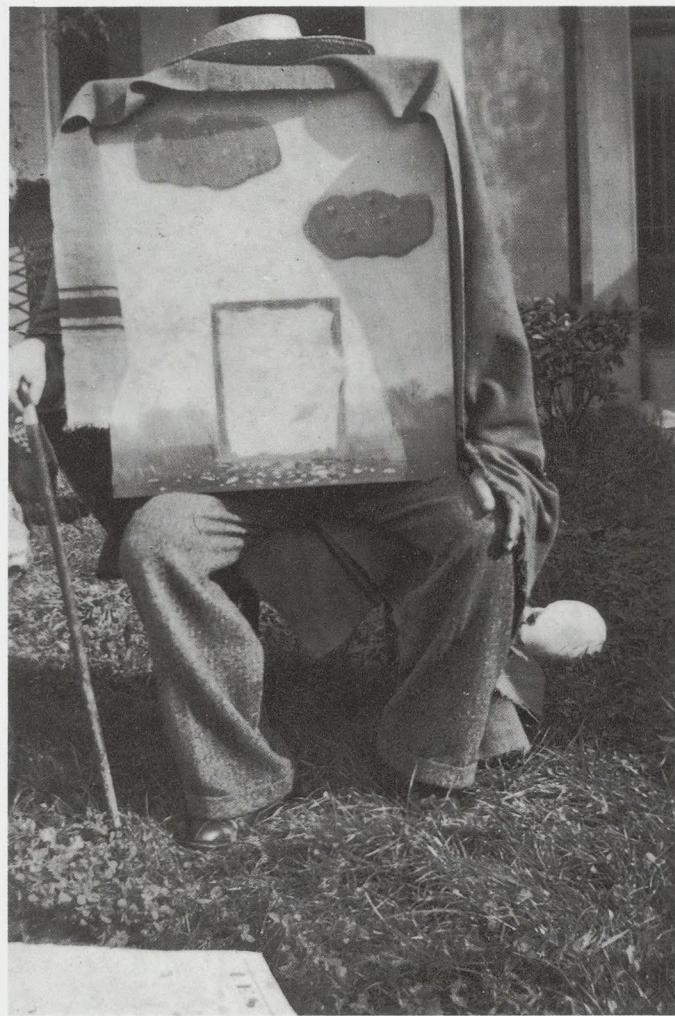


Fig. 200. René Magritte, *God the Eighth Day*, 1937.  
Collection John C. Waddell, New York.

During the thirties, he did the cover for Breton's book *Qu'est-ce-que le surréalisme* (1934), published an article in the dissident surrealist journal *Documents*, continued to show—in Paris, Brussels, London (at the International Surrealist Exhibition), Japan, and the U.S.S.R.—realized several book and musical score covers, and contributed to "Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism," the exhibition organized at The Museum of Modern Art by Alfred Barr. In Antwerp, Magritte gave his autobiographical lecture, "La Ligne de vie" (1938), which outlined his desire to "open new paths to the perception of reality." He exhibited at the International Surrealist Exhibition held at the Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris (1938).

At the outbreak of the war Magritte contributed to Raoul Ubac's review, *L'Invention collective*, spent a few months in Carcassonne in the south of France with the Ubacs and fellow surrealist Louis Scutenaire (and his wife), but returned to Brussels (1940), where he continued to exhibit. He adopted a quasi-impressionist, broken-brushwork style in painting for a short period and saw

two monographs published on his life and work. The first monograph (August 1943) was by Marcel Mariën and was followed by Nougé's book, *René Magritte ou les images défendues* (October 1943).

Magritte broke definitively with the Communist party (1945) and continued to write tracts, manifestos, and other works in collaboration with Mariën and Nougé. He distanced himself from the French surrealist group and in particular, André Breton. The end of the 1940s saw the continuation of numerous exhibitions, in New York, Brussels, Paris, Hollywood (Copley Galleries), in addition to the emergence of the artist's vache style for a brief time. The first of many retrospectives took place in Brussels at the Palais des Beaux-Arts (1954; catalogue written by Mesens), followed by several others in Liège, Dallas, and elsewhere. Shortly before his death, Magritte traveled to the United States for the first time, for his retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art.

Practicing photography between 1928 and 1955 during his leisure time, Magritte composed "documents-souvenirs" consisting of photographs of his family and friends, often in invented situations. The titles, for the most part, were invented by Louis Scutenaire after Magritte's death. It was rare that the artist used a photograph as a compositional support for a subsequent painting.

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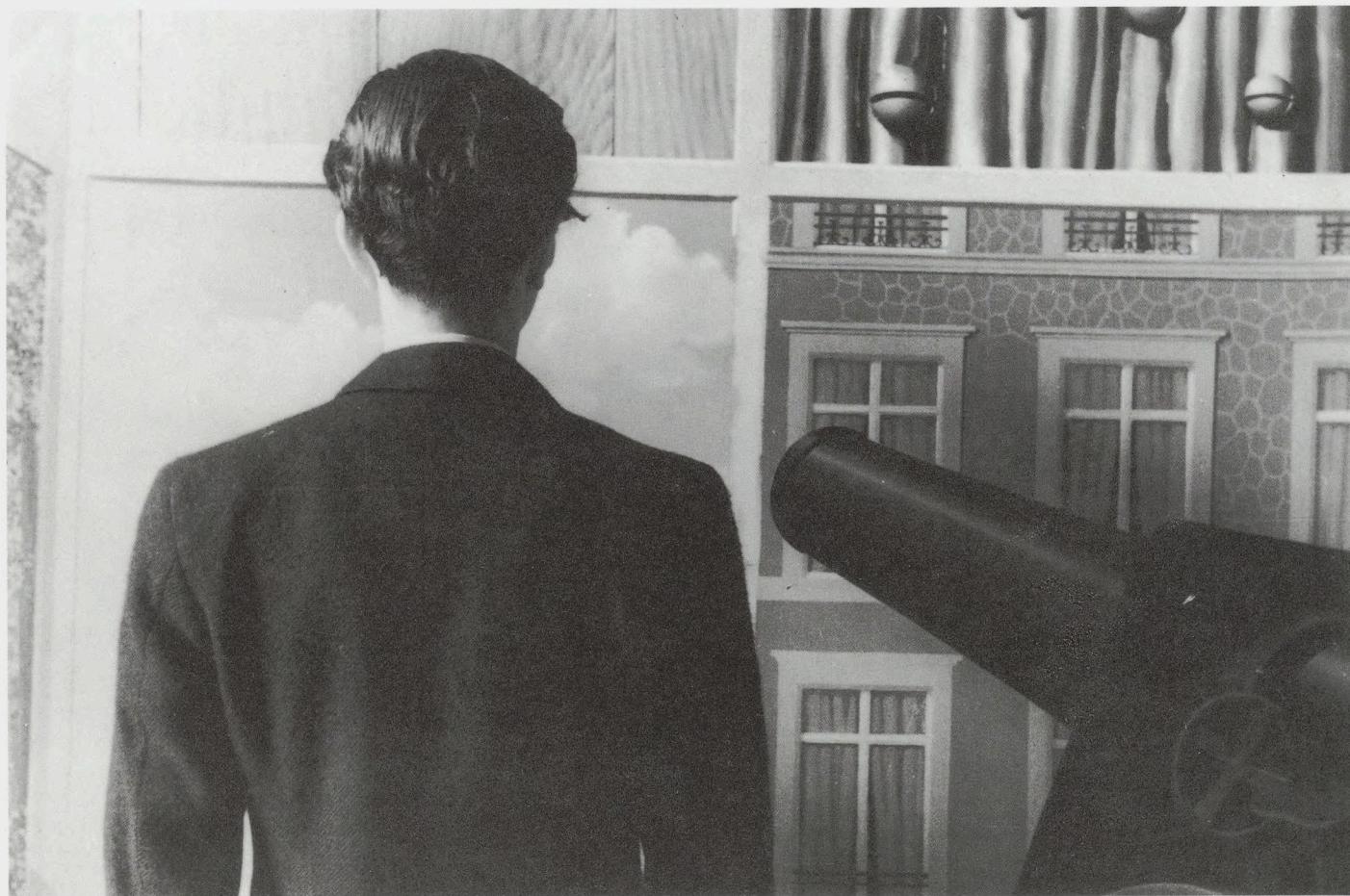


Fig. 201. René Magritte, *Edward James in Front of Au Seuil de la liberté*, 1937. Collection John C. Waddell, New York.

## LÉO MALET

(Born 1908, Montpellier; lives in Paris)

Poet and anarchist Léo Malet began participating in the surrealist movement by contributing to the "Exhibition of Surrealist Objects" at the Galerie Charles Ratton (1936) an "*objet-reflet*"—a photograph of an object split and doubled by mirrors positioned at right angles. Another of Malet's "automatist" procedures was "*décollage*," which involved tearing away parts of the superimposed layers of billboards to provoke the "fortuitous encounters" of newly juxtaposed images. This process was to be rediscovered in the 1950s by the French "*affichistes*" of

the New Realism. After World War II Malet pursued this "art of the palings" (the "found" collage of juxtaposed images posted on public walls) through detective fiction, especially in a series titled *Nouveaux Mystères de Paris*.

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Fig. 202. Léo Malet, *Untitled*, c. 1938. Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan.

## MARCEL MARIËN

(Born 1920, Antwerp; lives in Brussels)

Marcel Mariën began his artistic career as an apprentice to a photographer (1935). Two years later, aged seventeen, he met several of the major surrealists, Paul Nougé, Louis Scutenaire, René Magritte. Since that time he has been the spiritual heir of their work and convictions, although he has added his personal contribution to the movement as well.

Upon E. L. T. Mesens's request, Mariën participated in the London exhibition, "Surrealist Objects and Poems"

(1937). During World War II he was imprisoned in Germany (1940–41). Freed in 1941, he returned to Paris and founded the publishing house of L'Aiguille Aimantée, which issued Paul Eluard's *Moralité du sommeil*, among other works. He then established Editions du Miroir Infidèle with Magritte (1945). With Paul Colinet and Christian Dotremont, he started the weekly magazine *Le Ciel bleu* (1945–46). For the American surrealist journal, *View*, he took charge of a special issue on Belgian surrealism, which appeared after the war.

Mariën participated in the show "Surréalisme," which Magritte organized at the Galerie des Editions La Boétie. In the early 1950s Mariën served on a Swedish freighter, which traveled from Normandy to the West Indies. He founded the magazine *Les Lèvres nues* (1954), which published articles by the major Belgian surrealists, including Magritte, Nougé, Scutenaire, André Souris, and such postsurrealist "Situationistes" as Guy Debord.

Experimenting with filmmaking, Mariën created a scandal in Belgium with *L'Imitation du cinéma*, which was banned in France as pornographic. During the early 1960s he traveled to Paris, the United States, and China, where he worked on the review *China in Construction*. He returned with an extremely critical opinion of Mao's regime. By the mid sixties Mariën once more took up work on collages and assemblages, an activity that continues today. His first retrospective, at the Galerie Defacqz in Brussels (1967), marked the beginning of many shows throughout Europe. Although Mariën has published a great deal throughout his life (for example, *La Chaise de sable* [1940], *L'Oiseau qui n'a qu'une aile* [1941], *Les Corrections naturelles* [1947], *Théorie de la révolution mondiale immédiate* [1958], *Figures de poupe* [1979], *L'Activité surréaliste en Belgique* [1979], *Les Fantômes du château de cartes* [1981], *La Marche palière* [1982]), his other artistic achievements, notably in photography, remain of greater interest.

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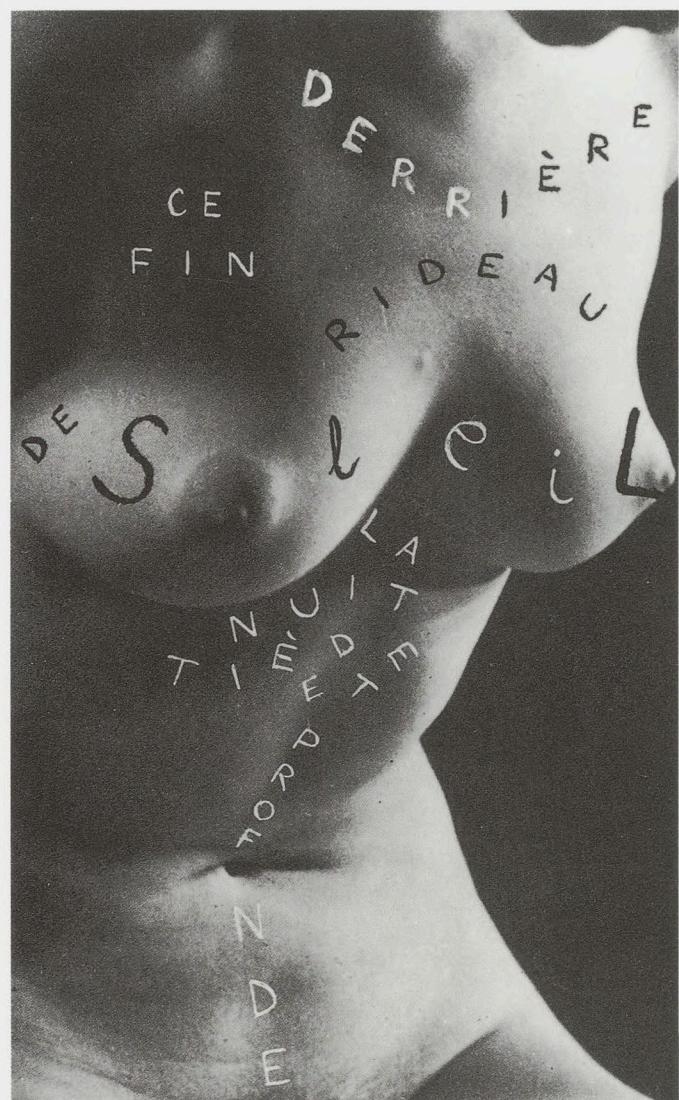


Fig. 203. Marcel Mariën, *Behind the Curtain, Sunset (Derrière le rideau fin de soleil)*, 1955. Collection Yves Gevaert, Brussels.

## E. L. T. MESENS

(Born 1903, Brussels; died 1971, Brussels)

E. L. T. Mesens began his artistic career as a musician. His meeting at age sixteen with Erik Satie sparked an interest in musical composition that resulted in the score of *Garage* (composed, 1921; published, 1926), inspired by a Philippe Soupault poem. Mesens was hired to give piano lessons to Paul Magritte and met his brother René (1920), with whom he developed a lasting friendship that resulted in many collaborative projects.

Mesens continued to compose (first concert, 1922, Brussels) until 1923, when he turned his interest to poetry and the plastic arts. His earlier trip to Paris (1921), where he met Tzara, Duchamp, and Picabia, awakened his sensibilities to dada. He was introduced to the protosurrealist art of Giorgio de Chirico. Mesens's first poems were published in *391, Mecano*, and in the *Little Review*; his first collages and photomontages date from 1924.

Together, Mesens and Magritte worked on two reviews, *Oesophage* (one issue, 1925) and *Marie* (four issues, 1926). Mesens was instrumental in the formation of the Belgian surrealist group (1926). To earn a living he directed L'Epoque Gallery, owned by P.-G. Van Hecke. It was there that he organized a one-man show of Magritte's work and an international photographic show that included work by Eugène Atget, André Kertész, Man Ray, and others (1928). Van Hecke also directed the surrealist journal *Variétés*, to which Mesens contributed between 1928 and 1930, and where many of the important contemporary photographers—Man Ray, Tabard, and so on—were published. Although Mesens rarely used photographic elements in his collages, he did combine collage and photogram, and his interest in photography was always intense.

Mesens was responsible for a special issue of *Variétés*, "Le Surréalisme en 1929," and continued his work as organizer when he mounted the Magritte show at the Salle Giso in Brussels (1931). He founded the Nicolas Flamel publishing house (1933), which assembled a collective *hommage* by the surrealists dedicated to Violette Nozières, a young French woman whose murder of her father and sentence to the guillotine created a major scandal (1933–35). Dali, Ernst, Magritte, and others contributed to *Violette Nozières* (1933), which incorporated a Man Ray photograph on the cover. At the same time Mesens's own *Alphabet sourd aveugle*, with preface by Eluard, was published.



Fig. 204. E. L. T. Mesens, *The Disconcerting Light (La Lumière déconterante)*, 1926. Private collection.

Mesens's talents as an organizer were put to work next at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, for "Mino-taure" (1934), the first international exhibition of surrealism. The same year Mesens became editor-in-chief of the Belgian review *Documents* (of particular significance was "Intervention surréaliste," a special issue). With Roland Penrose, Breton, and Eluard, he organized the International Surrealist Exhibition in London (1936). He was included in Alfred Barr's historic "Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism" show at the Museum of Modern Art (1936).

Mesens settled in London (1938), where he ran the London Gallery, created and backed, in part, by Penrose. Mesens edited the gallery's review, *London Bulletin*. He introduced several artists to the London art world, such as Piet Mondrian, Naum Gabo, and Kurt Schwitters, in addition to many of the surrealists—Magritte, Ernst, Miró, and others. In London he met his future wife, Sybil

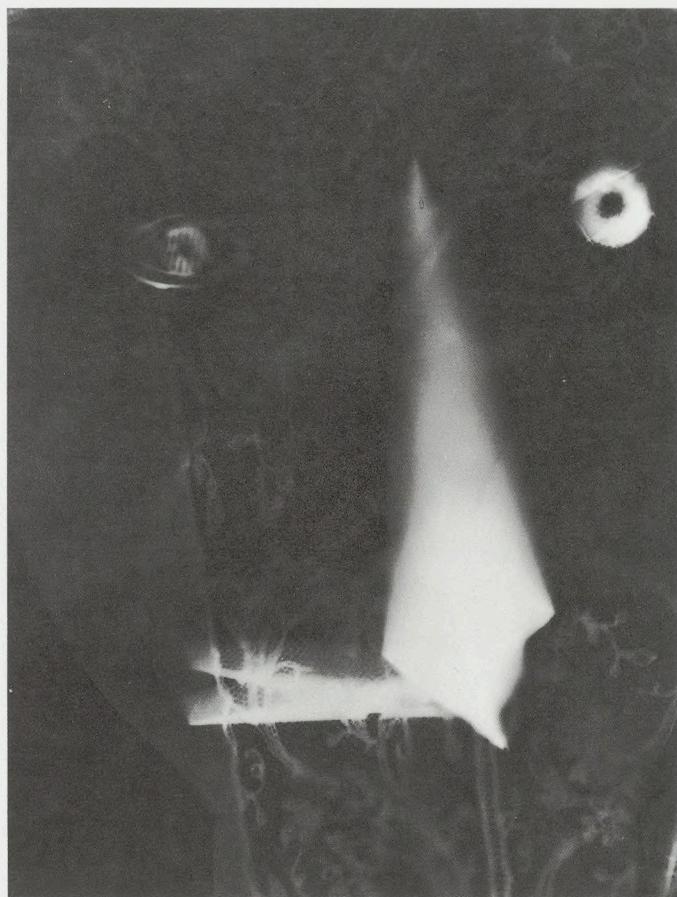


Fig. 205. E. L. T. Mesens, *Widow's Mask for the Waltz* (*Maxque de veuve pour la valse*), c. 1929. Private collection.

Stevenson, and took part in anti-Nazi broadcasts at the B.B.C. in addition to pursuing his wartime work as translator (1941). With Jacques Brunius, Mesens struggled to keep together the English surrealist movement during the war.

In 1944 Mesens published *Troisième Front, poèmes de guerre suivi de pièces détachées* (London Gallery Editions) and *Message from Nowhere*, a collective work; with Brunius he wrote the tract, *Idolatry and Confusion*. His book, *The Cubist Spirit in Its Time* accompanied the Cubist show he organized (1945). After the closing of the London Gallery, he helped with a show of Max Ernst's work at the Institute of Contemporary Art (1951).

Although Mesens had experimented with collage since 1924, his numerous activities led him to abandon this art form until 1954, when he actively took it up again. That year he was also in charge of the retrospective of Magritte's work at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

Mesens's own one-man show was held at Simone Collinet's Galerie Furstenberg, Paris (1958). He published his *Poèmes 1923–1958* (Editions Le Terrain Vague, 1959), which was illustrated by Magritte, and he had a second one-man show at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels (1959). During the 1960s several important exhibitions of Mesens's work were organized, in Milan, London, Brussels, Turin, and Venice, including a retrospective at the Casino of Knokke-Le-Zoute (catalogue by Jacques Brunius). The last show Mesens put together was the biggest exhibition of surrealist art mounted since 1936; it took place during the Festival of Exeter (1967).

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## LEE MILLER

(Born 1907, Poughkeepsie; died 1978, Sussex, England)

Lee Miller's interest in photography was sparked in early childhood by her father, a passionate amateur photographer. Through her friendship with Condé Nast, then editor of *Vogue*, and Frank Crowninshield, editor of *Vanity Fair* and other magazines, she became known to the New York fashion world by the time she was sixteen. In the late 1920s she attended the Art Students League and modeled for Edward Steichen and other famous photographers. But she longed for Paris. *Vogue* gave her an illustration assignment in Europe (1929). Once there she modeled for the fashion photographer Hoynigen Huené.

Her contact with Steichen had strengthened her desire to master photography. She sought out Man Ray and became his assistant-apprentice as well as one of his favorite models. While working in the darkroom one day (about 1930) she accidentally exposed a developing print to light. The result was solarization, which introduces tonal elements of the photographic negative into the positive print. It became part of surrealist photography's visual vocabulary.

Attracted by surrealist thought and its milieu, she became the friend of such figures as Max Ernst, Paul Eluard, and André Breton. Partly due to her appearance in Jean Cocteau's film *Le Sang d'un poète* (1930), which



Fig. 206. Lee Miller, *Untitled*, 1931. Art Institute of Chicago.



Fig. 207. Lee Miller, *Untitled*, 1940. Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex, England.

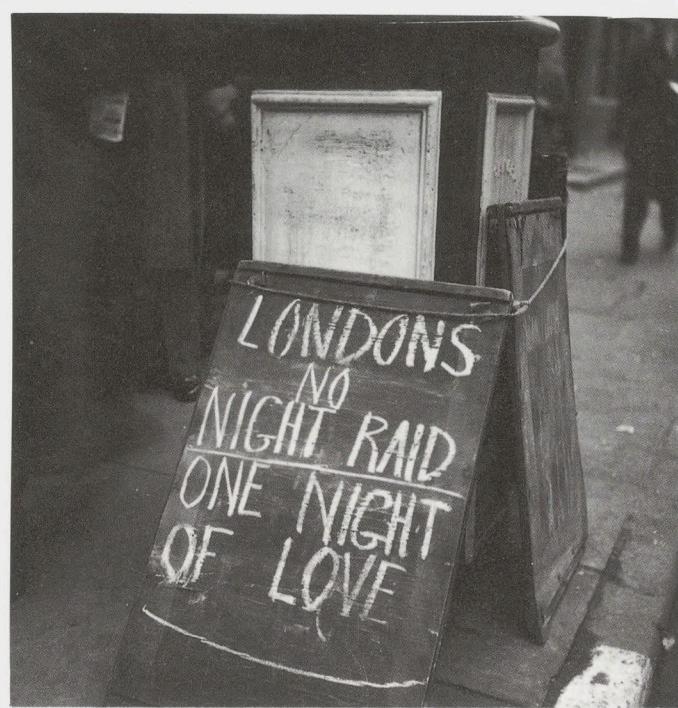


Fig. 208. Lee Miller, *Untitled*, 1940. Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex, England.

resulted in a temporary falling-out with Man Ray, Miller returned to New York to set up her own studio. There she did high-level advertising photography and portraits of artists and society figures, as well as her own work.

She was included in Julien Levy's gallery exhibition "Modern European Photographers" (1932) and had her own show at the gallery a year later. In October 1934 Miller married an Egyptian, Aziz Eloui Bey, and went to live with him in Cairo. The Middle East afforded an opportunity to experiment with landscape photography on trips into the desert. She visited Paris (1937), where she met Roland Penrose, and divided her time between Europe and the Middle East for the next few years. At the outbreak of World War II Miller left her husband to live with Penrose in London. Appointed staff photographer for *Vogue*, she became a war correspondent for the U.S. Army (1943) and decided to work in photojournalism. Her reportage took her to most parts of war-torn Europe, including the German surrender at Beaugency, and the fall of the Eagle's Nest at Berchtesgaden. She was one of the first to see and photograph the concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald.

After the war Miller worked once again for *Vogue*. She married Penrose (1947), and their son, Anthony, was born (1948). She gradually gave up work at this time, although she took photographs for Penrose's *Picasso, His Life and Work* (1958). Aside from her commercial output,

her photographs appeared in Lise Deharne's review, *Le Phare de Neuilly* (1937–38) and in the *London Bulletin* (1937–40).

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Fig. 210. Lee Miller, *Untitled*, 1930. Art institute of Chicago.



Fig. 209. Lee Miller, *Untitled*, 1931. Art Institute of Chicago.

## PAUL NOUGÉ

(Born 1895, Brussels; died 1967, Brussels)

Born of a Belgian mother and a French father, Nougé started to study biochemistry (1909) and earned his living as a biochemist (1919–53). Inspired more by Paul Valéry than by the surrealists' adopted nineteenth-century ancestor, Lautréamont, his theoretic work tends to overshadow his poetry and photography.

Nougé was one of the founding members of the Belgian Communist Party (1919); this political background was later the cause of certain differences between him and his French surrealist counterparts. With Camille Goemans and Marcel Lecomte, Nougé founded the review *Correspondance*, which constituted a surrealist group parallel to that organized by Mesens and Magritte. The two groups merged in 1926. Nougé's first meeting with the French surrealists Aragon, Breton, and Eluard dates from his signing the tract *La Révolution d'abord et toujours* (1925). His preface for Magritte's show at the Galerie Le Centaure in Brussels (1927) was the first of a voluminous number to come. He published *Quelques Écrits et quelques dessins de Clarisse Juranville* (1927), a book of his poems illustrated by Magritte. He also collaborated with Magritte, who was working as a commercial artist for a furrier, by writing introductory texts for the fashion catalogues. Nougé founded the review *Distances* (1928), to which many surrealists contributed.

From December 1929 to February 1930, Nougé produced nineteen photographs, which were subsequently published by Marcel Mariën as *Subversion des images* (1968), accompanied by the artist's own texts. From 1930 on, Nougé played an important role as a theorist, publishing a number of articles, tracts, and other texts (such as "Images défendues" in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, no. 5; "Couteau dans la plaie" in *Bulletin international du surrealisme*, no. 3; and "René Magritte ou la révélation objective" in *Les Beaux-Arts* [Brussels, 1936]). He also contributed the preface to the catalogue for Magritte's exhibition at the London Gallery (1938) and another for an exhibition in Brussels (1939).

During World War II Nougé served briefly in the French army (due to his father's nationality). He contributed a preface for an exhibition of Raoul Ubac's photographs (1941). His *René Magritte ou les images défendues* (1943), was followed two years later by his participation in the show "Surréalisme" at the Galerie des Editions La Boétie, Brussels. With Magritte, he developed the theory ex-



Fig. 211. Paul Nougé, *Woman Frightened by a String* (*Femme effrayée par une ficelle*; for *Subversion des images*), 1929–30. Collection Yves Gevaert, Brussels.

pressed as "Surréalisme en plein soleil" (1945), to which Breton objected, causing a rift between the two surrealist groups.

Nougé continued to write important prefaces for several of Magritte's exhibitions in the next few years. With Mariën, he contributed to the review *Les Lèvres nues* (after 1950) and, from time to time, to Breton's review *La Brèche*. Nougé's theoretical writings were published as *Histoire de ne pas rire* (1956).

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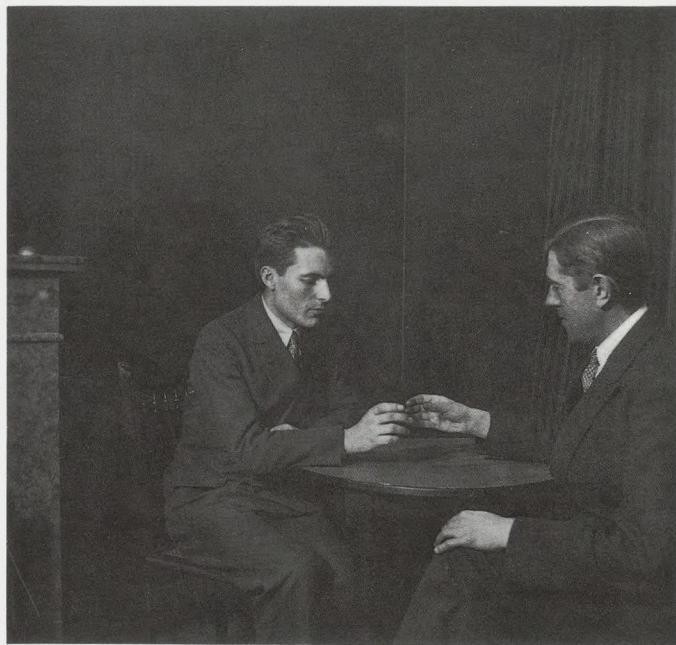


Fig. 212. Paul Nougé, *The Drinkers* (*Les buveurs*; for *Subversion des images*), 1929–30. Collection Yves Gevaert, Brussels.



Fig. 214. Paul Nougé, *The Birth of the Object* (*La naissance de l'objet*; for *Subversion des images*), 1929–30. Collection Yves Gevaert, Brussels.



Fig. 213. Paul Nougé, *The Harvests of Sleep* (*Les vendages du sommeil*; for *Subversion des images*), 1929–30. Collection Yves Gevaert, Brussels.



Fig. 215. Paul Nougé, *Coat Hung in the Void* (*Manteau suspendu dans le vide*; for *Subversion des images*), 1929–30. Collection Yves Gevaert, Brussels.



Fig. 216. Roger Parry, *Untitled*, 1929. The Art Institute of Chicago.

### ROGER PARRY

(Born 1905, Paris; died 1977, Cognac, France)

Born of modest means, Parry grew up in Issy-les-Moulineaux, a suburb of Paris. He was trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs, where he concentrated on painting. He was employed by the department store Le Printemps as an architectural designer and decorator, drawing up the plans for stands and window displays (1925–28). Parry met Maurice Tabard and apprenticed with him briefly (1927–28), learning photography. While working for Gallimard and the N. R. F. as a portrait photographer, Parry met André Malraux (1928). Parry used the photographic portraits to make displays for Gallimard's bookshop windows.

Attracted by the example of André Breton's *Nadja* and its photographs by Jacques-André Boiffard, Parry decided to "illustrate" a surrealist work photographically. For this project, he selected Léon-Paul Fargue's book *Banalités* (1922), and executed an illustrated edition (1930).

Parry traveled to Africa (1931) and to Tahiti (1932). His photographs from the second trip resulted in a book, *Tahiti* (1934). He married Madeleine Montigny (1935).

During the 1930s, the magazine *Photographie* regularly included his work. The American dealer specializing in surrealism, Julien Levy, had become acquainted with Parry's photography through this source as well as through *Banalités*. In the early 1930s Tabard handed over the directorship of the Deberny Peignot photography studios to Parry, who served as set still-photographer for Jean Vigo's last film, *L'Atalante* (1933). In the late 1930s Parry worked as a photographic reporter for the news agency Opéra Mundi and for *Paris Match*.

During World War II, after the French Liberation, Parry became a war correspondent for the Agence France Presse (1944–49) and formed with Henri Cartier-Bresson (1944) a Liberation committee composed of journalists who followed the army's movements. With Malraux, he created the Univers des Formes collection for Gallimard, an ongoing series of books devoted to art history. Parry served as art director of the series.

## ROLAND PENROSE

(Born 1900, London; died 1984, England)

Roland Penrose's parents were Quakers, his father an academic painter and his mother a member of a wealthy banking family. A strict Victorian upbringing in a home filled with curios of the era served as background to a later revolt against convention, an attitude destined to endear him to the surrealists.

His experience as a driver in the First British Ambulance Unit for Italy (1918) revealed a world outside of the sheltered one he had known. Back in England after the war, he completed his education at Cambridge, where he met art critics Roger Fry and Duncan Grant. He enrolled in the School of Architecture for a brief period, learned of the Cubists and dadaists, and, with Fry's aid and encouragement, left for France to pursue an artistic career.

In Paris, Penrose met Braque, attended classes at the academy of André Lhote, met the British painter and engraver Stanley William Hayter, Man Ray, and others (1922). Reading the work of André Breton, Penrose developed an appreciation for the fantastic, the dream experience, and the erotic. He married Valentine Boué, a poet from Gascony, with whom he lived for the next ten years. In the mid 1920s, through Max Ernst, who was to remain his lifelong friend, Penrose was introduced firsthand to surrealism. The death of his parents left him financially independent, and he was able to invest in several projects, such as the publication of Ernst's *Une Semaine de bonté* (1934), in addition to Robert Bresson's first film.

In England Penrose met the British poet David Gascoyne. Deciding to bring surrealism to London, the two men associated themselves with several other avant-garde supporters, Herbert Read, Humphrey Jennings, Henry Moore, Eileen Agar, and others. The International Surrealist Exhibition, which was held in London (1936), was the work of Penrose, who organized the English material, and Eluard and Breton, who were responsible for the French. In addition to surrealist art, the exhibition featured primitive art, children's art, and work by the insane. E. L. T. Mesens, who had helped with the show, became director of the London Gallery, which Penrose had founded. Mesens edited the *London Bulletin*, the gallery's review, until the war forced it to halt (1940).

Having met Lee Miller in 1937, he traveled with her through the Balkans (1938), visiting Harry Brauner, the brother of the surrealist painter, Victor. During that trip Penrose took pictures and wrote a text for *The Road Is Wider than Long* (1939). During the war, in England,



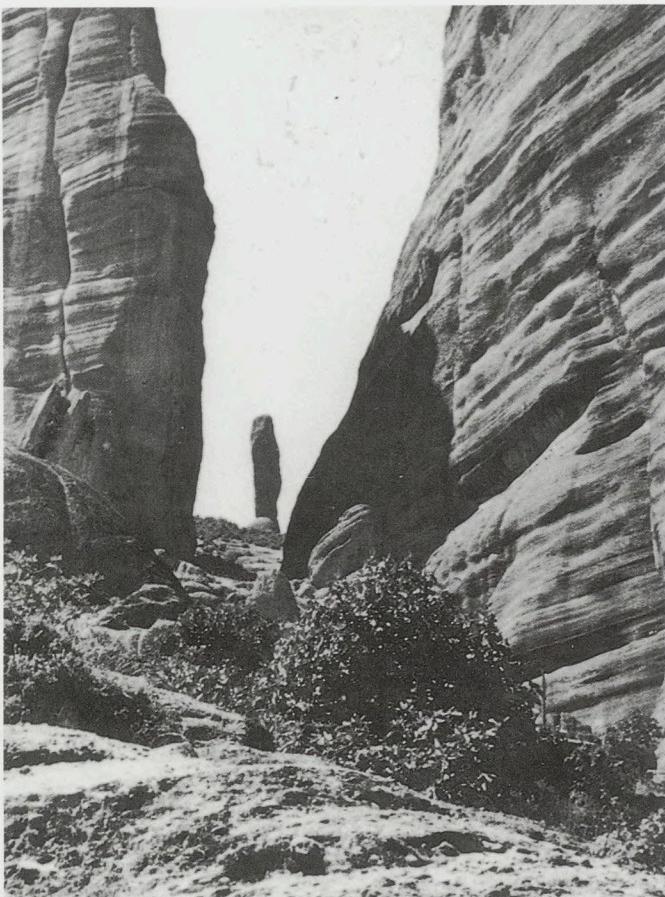
Fig. 217. Roland Penrose, *The Road Is Wider Than Long*, 1938.  
Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



Fig. 218. Roland Penrose, *The Road Is Wider Than Long*, 1938.  
Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



Fig. 219. Roland Penrose, *The Road Is Wider Than Long*, 1938.  
Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.



Penrose compiled *In the Service of the People*, a book of clandestine publications by French intellectuals. In the late 1940s Penrose helped to create the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. He married Miller (1947), and a son, Anthony, was born shortly afterward (1948).

Penrose was commissioned (1954) to write a Picasso monograph, published as *Picasso, His Life and Work* (1958). He was awarded several honors, including a knighthood, became a trustee of the Tate Gallery, and served as President of the I.C.A. (1969–70).

Although Penrose's role as organizer, collector, cultural emissary, and general catalyst somewhat overshadowed his own artistic accomplishments, he actively painted and experimented with collages and other art forms throughout his lifetime. He was especially interested in the interdependence of color and structure, a concern reflected in his use of color postcards in his collages.

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Above: Fig. 220. Roland Penrose, *The Road Is Wider Than Long*, 1938. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

Below: Fig. 221. Roland Penrose, *The Road Is Wider Than Long*, 1938. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

## MAN RAY

(Born 1890, Philadelphia; died 1976, Paris)

Throughout his childhood in Brooklyn, Man Ray was attracted to the arts: literature, drawing, and painting. However, he rejected a scholarship to study architecture and instead went to work in New York at a series of odd jobs. He eventually settled down as a commercial artist for a publisher of maps and atlases, where he did layouts, lettering, and typography. He took night classes in art at the National Academy of Design (1908) and attended the avant-garde Ferrer School (1911–13), also at night. Having discovered the 291 gallery, he developed a close friendship with its director, the photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1911), through whom he met many of the advanced photographers and painters who showed at 291. Like many young artists, Man Ray was greatly impressed by the Armory Show (1913).

He married Adon (Donna) Lacroix (1914), and he lived with her in an artist's colony at Ridgefield, New Jersey, commuting to New York a few days a week to work. The rest of the week was devoted to painting. To publicize his first one-man show, at the Daniel Gallery (1915), he photographed his own works. This was his first direct experience with photography. A lifelong friendship with Marcel Duchamp began (1915), and he experimented with his first airbrush paintings (1918), after having worked previously with collage.

After breaking with Adon Lacroix, Man Ray left commercial art to set up a portrait photography business. He photographed many artists and literary figures, including the composer Edgard Varèse, Duchamp, the painter Joseph Stella, and the writer Djuna Barnes. He collaborated with Duchamp to found the Société Anonyme,

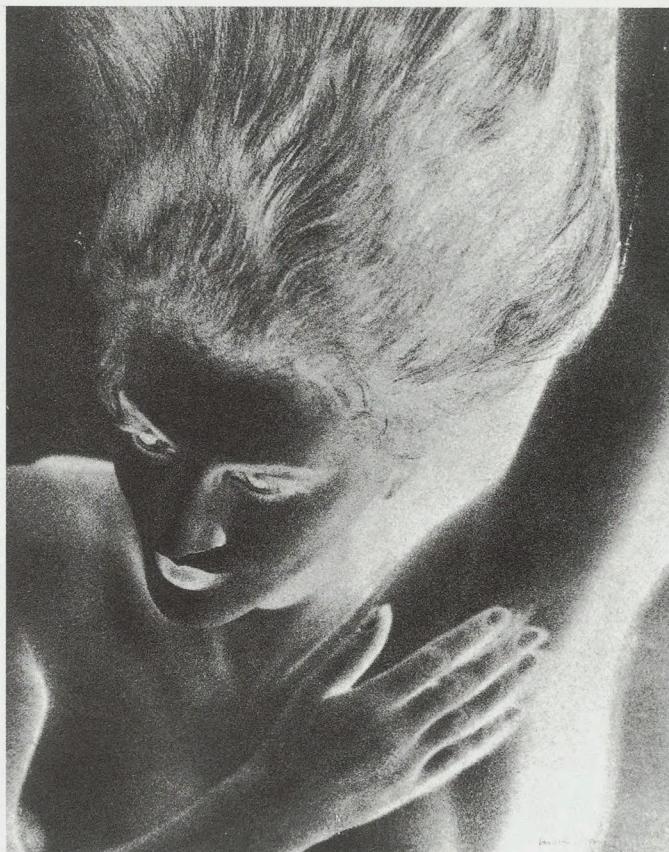


Fig. 223. Man Ray, *Untitled*, (1930). Museum of Modern Art, New York.

a name he invented for Katherine S. Dreier's project for a museum of modern art (1920). At this time, he was photographing his own works, and he executed *Elevage de poussière* (*Dust Breeding*, 1920), a photograph of Duchamp's "Large Glass" (*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, 1915–23) made by leaving the shutter open for an hour. Man Ray, Picabia, and Duchamp were involved in forming a New York dada group (1917) and in publishing a single issue of the group's dada magazine.

Man Ray visited France and, through his friendship with Duchamp, was able to meet the group associated with the protosurrealist magazine *Littérature* (1921). In Paris, he stayed in a room that Tristan Tzara had lent him in Passy, and, with Picabia's help, he met the avant-garde. He soon started to do fashion photography for the designer Paul Poiret, building up a thriving business. He had his first Paris show at Philippe Soupault's gallery (1921). The following year (1922), through an accident in the darkroom, he discovered the photogram technique, a means of producing cameraless photographs. The technique had been known since the nineteenth century but had not yet been exploited. (Christian Schad had also experimented with photograms, as would Moholy-Nagy.)

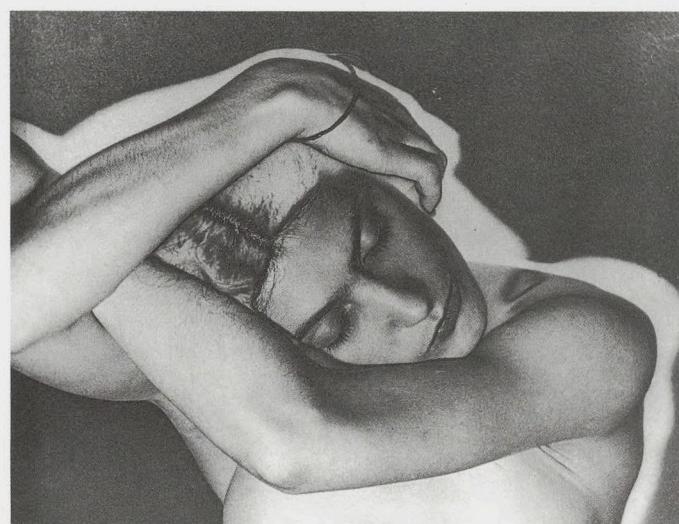


Fig. 222. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1931. Private collection.

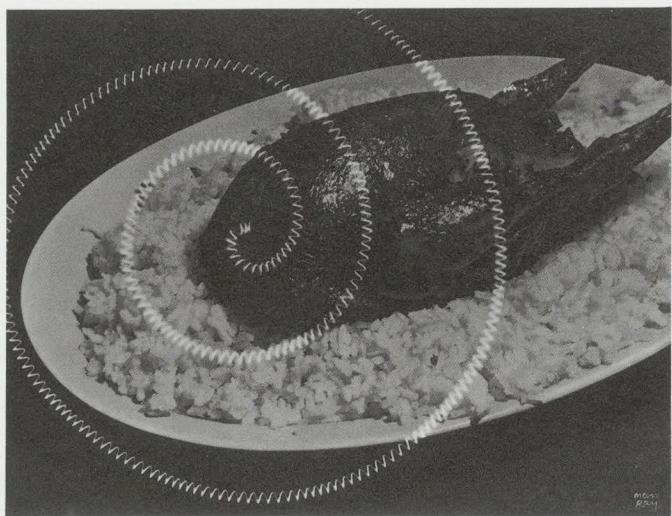


Fig. 224. Man Ray, *Untitled* (from *Electricité*), 1931. J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.

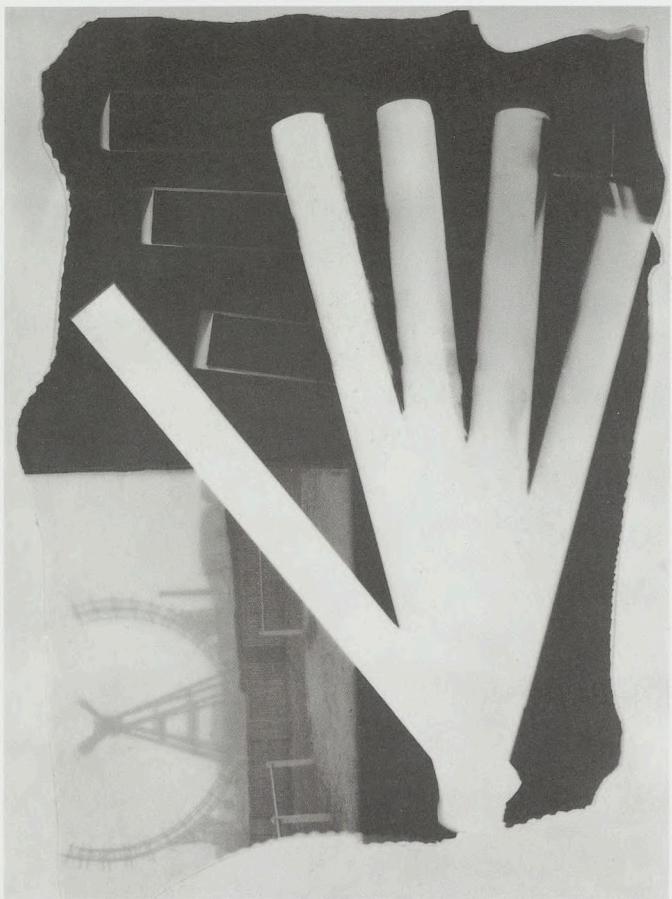


Fig. 225. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1923. The Art Institute of Chicago.

Man Ray dubbed his new-found technique "rayography," introduced Tzara to it, and together they made *Les Champs délicieux* (1922), a book of rayographs prefaced by Tzara. Rayographs were exhibited for the first time in 1926.

Man Ray had several assistants who became important photographers in their own right: Berenice Abbott, Jacques-André Boiffard, Bill Brandt, and Lee Miller.

Man Ray made the film *Le Retour à la raison* (1923),

which put his rayographs into motion. For six years he lived with the rather notorious Kiki of Montparnasse (Alice Prin) while carrying out both his experimental art work and conducting his fashion and portrait photography business. He photographed the aristocracy—Marquise Casati, Count and Countesse Pecci-Blunt, the Aga Khan—many American and English writers—including Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound, James Joyce—and such artists as Matisse, Brancusi, Braque, and Picasso. He spent the summer of 1933 in Spain, visiting Dalí in the company of Duchamp. After this, successive summers before World War II were spent in Mougins with Picasso, Dora Maar, Lee Miller, and Roland Penrose.

With the rise of Hitler, Man Ray left France for the United States. He settled in Hollywood (1942), taught photography in Los Angeles (1942–50), and married Juliet Browner (1946). He returned to France (1951).

At the Venice Biennale (1961) Man Ray received the Gold Medal for Photography. He published *Self-Portrait* (1963), judiciously summing up his attitude toward painting and photography: "I paint what I cannot photograph, and I photograph what I do not wish to paint."

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Fig. 226. Man Ray, *Untitled*, c. 1923. Private collection.

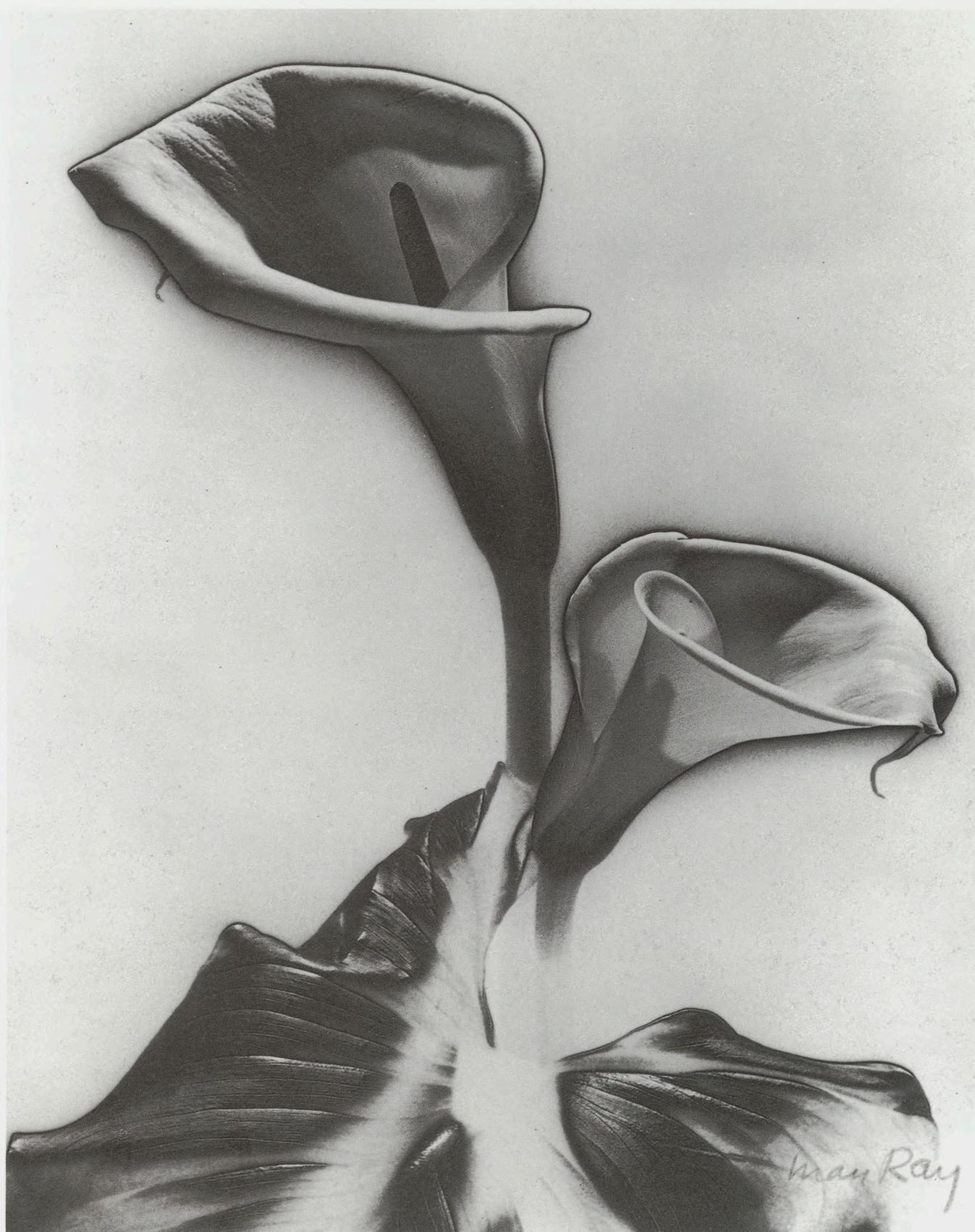


Fig. 227. Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1930. J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.

## FREDERICK SOMMER

(Born 1905, Angri, Italy; lives in Prescott, Arizona)

The first part of Sommer's childhood was spent in the Mediterranean. His father, of German origin, and his Swiss mother moved the family to São Paulo, Brazil (1913). There Sommer learned Spanish, French, and Portuguese in addition to his native Italian and German. Sommer's father, a city planner, landscape architect, and horticulturist introduced him to design. He began to work in his father's architectural office at age eleven as a draftsman and won second prize in an architectural competition (1921). By the time Sommer was eighteen, he had designed a municipal garden in Rio de Janeiro and had decided to study in the United States. He began to work as assistant to Edward Gordon Davis, chairman of the landscape architecture department at Cornell University, while studying for his Masters of Arts in Landscape Architecture (awarded 1927). Back in Rio (1927), Sommer went to work for his father, doing landscape architecture, city and site planning in Rio and in other Brazilian cities. He returned to America to marry Frances Watson (1928).

After discovering that he was suffering from tuberculosis (1930), Sommer traveled to Europe (1931), visiting several cities before settling in Arosa, Switzerland. It was there that he first contemplated taking up photography, after noticing a Plaubel Makina camera in a shop window. Sommer bought the camera and started experimenting.

He subsequently traveled to France and Italy, where he studied art, architecture, and Italian gardens, and then to Tucson, Arizona. At the Increase Robinson Gallery (Chicago), Sommer saw Edward Weston's work for the first time (1933) in a recently published book of his photographs edited by Merle Armitage. After a short stay in Los Angeles (1934), Sommer moved to Prescott, Arizona (1935). His interest in photography was rekindled by his visit to Alfred Stieglitz and his New York gallery, An American Place (1935), where he saw the work of Arthur Dove, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, and others. Sommer met Weston during a visit to Santa Monica, California (1936) and exchanged his drawings for Weston's photographs. The two met again during Weston's trip to the Southwest (1938). At that time, Sommer bought a Century Universal 8" x 10" camera, which he used to make a great number of his images. He set to work on the Arizona landscapes (1939–40) and went to New York (1940), where he met Charles Sheeler, whose photographs he admired. Sommer made another important acquaintance in Max Ernst (1941), with whom he developed a

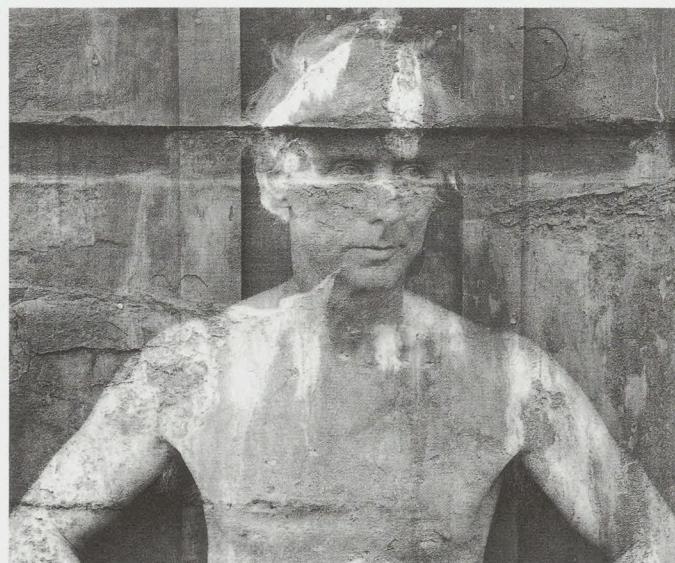


Fig. 228. Frederick Sommer, *Max Ernst*, 1946.  
Collection of the artist, Prescott, Arizona.

close friendship. From 1946 on, Sommer started exhibiting his photographs (he had already had several exhibitions of his watercolors) and had his first one-man show at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (1946). He made his first *cliché verre* in 1949.

Sommer contributed to Charles-Henri Ford's magazine, *View*, along with Breton, Duchamp, Man Ray, Joseph Cornell, and David Hare, as well as to the surrealist magazine *VVV*, edited by Hare, Breton, and Duchamp. Sommer was the only photographer to exhibit at the International Surrealist Exhibition at the Galerie Maeght (1947); he showed some of the photographs he considered "dessins automatiques."

Sommer has developed a wide technical range: *étirage*, deformation of the negative while superimposing the distorted image on another graphic image; *clichés-verres*; the effects of smoke on glass; experiments with synthetic negatives, cellophane, and paint on cellophane. Since the fifties, Sommer has divided his time between extensive travels (Mexico, Japan, Europe, New Zealand), lecturing, teaching, and continuing research in the arts. *F. Sommer 1939–1962*, a major study of his work, was published by Aperture. Sommer has had many one-man shows and has participated in numerous group shows; he is represented in major public collections.

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Fig. 229. Frederick Sommer, *Arizona Landscape*, 1943. Collection Jo C. Tarrt, Washington, D. C.



Fig. 230. Frederick Sommer, *Arizona Landscape*, 1943. Jedermann Collection, N. A.

L'AMOUR FOU



Fig. 231. Maurice Tabard, *Untitled*, 1929. Collection Lucien Treillard, Paris.

## MAURICE TABARD

(Born 1897, Lyon; died 1984, Nice)

Like many industrialists of the nineteenth century, Maurice Tabard's father, a silk manufacturer, was an amateur photographer. The boy left France when his father came to the silk mills of Paterson, New Jersey (1914). Tabard worked as a silk designer by day and studied art, primarily painting, at night. When his interest shifted to photography, he enrolled at the New York Institute of Photography (1916). The professional New York portrait photographers—Pirie MacDonald, Arnold Genthe, Dudley Hoyt—interested him, as did the work of Edward Steichen, whose assistant, Harvey White, became his friend. Tabard joined the Baltimore staff of the Bachrach firm as a portrait photographer (1922) and made many official Washington portraits, including one of the Coolidge family.

Tabard left the United States for Paris (1928), intending to work in fashion photography. Through Philippe Soupault, he made contact with the *Journal des Modes*, and *L'Album du Figaro*. Tabard met Man Ray and made avant-garde pictures with him. He became the friend of René Magritte. He met Roger Parry (1928) and undertook to teach him photography. At this time he was also in contact with André Kertész.

Tabard started his own experiments with solarization (1930; see Lee Miller biography, above), which drew the attention of Charles Peignot, editor of *Arts et Métiers graphiques*, which published Tabard's article on the technique (1933). During the 1930s, Tabard was one of the most popular avant-garde photographers. His work was often reproduced in *Bifur* (a journal edited by Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes), *Art et Décoration*, and *Arts et Métiers graphiques*. He was included in the show "Modern European Photographers" organized by the New York dealer Julien Levy (1932), and his photographs were seen regularly at the Galerie de la Pléiade.

During the German Occupation of France, Tabard worked as a still photographer for the Gaumont film studio, becoming a war correspondent for the French Motion Picture Service after the Liberation. After 1946 he continued fashion photography (for *Harper's Bazaar*, *Figaro des Modes*, *Elle*, and other magazines) along with research into the basis of photographic vision. Friend of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Roger Parry, and many more, Tabard always carried on his personal, creative photog-



Fig. 232. Maurice Tabard, *Untitled*, 1932. Collection Roger Therond, Paris.

raphy parallel to his commercial work. He wrote a theoretical text, *La Géométrie est la fondation des arts* (1948), and at the time of his death was in the process of writing a book on solarization. Often extremely complex, Tabard's photographs frequently incorporate solarization, double exposure, negative printing, foreshortened views, and montage.

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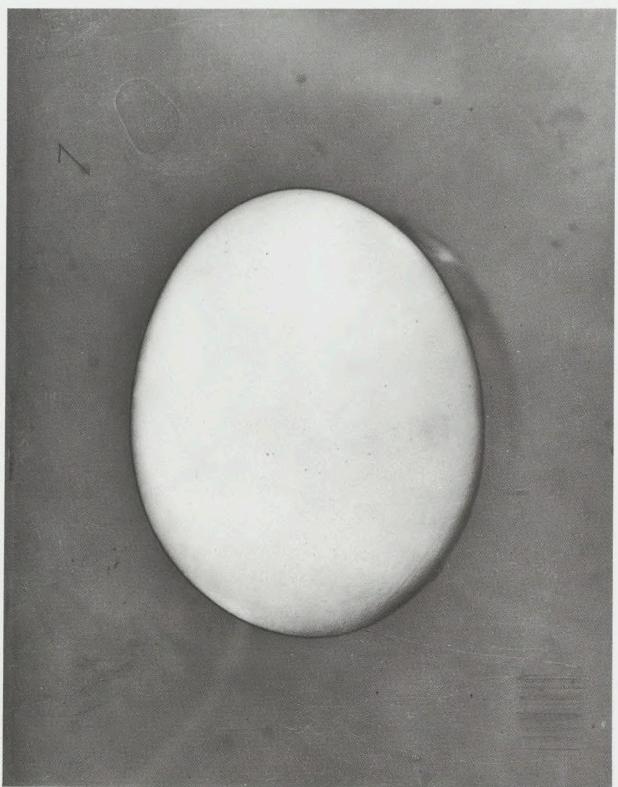


Fig. 233. Raoul Ubac, *Egg (L'Oeuf)*, 1939. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.

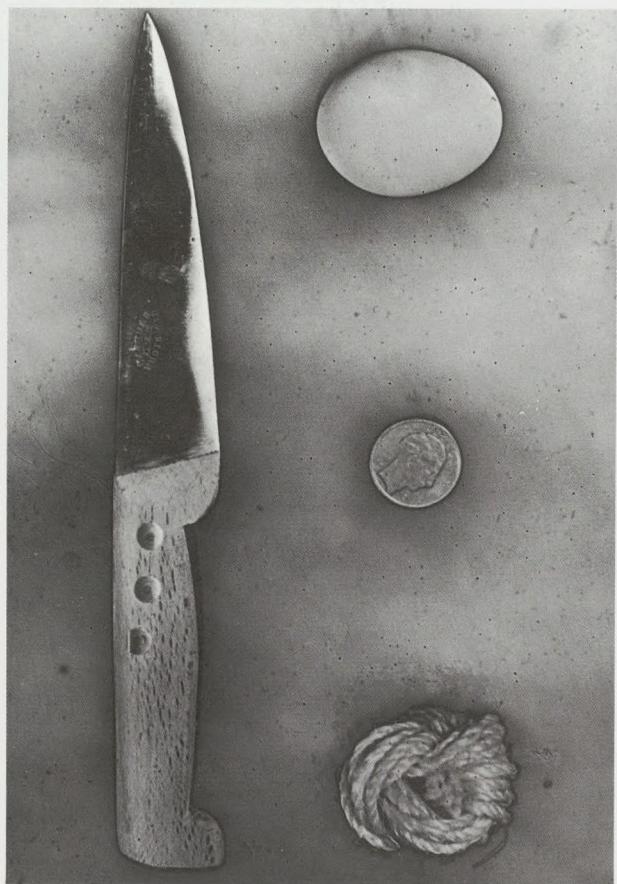


Fig. 234. Raoul Ubac, *Alphabetical Order / Nocturnal Fields (L'ordre alphabétique / La Campagne nocturne)*, 1941. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.

#### RAOUL UBAC

(Born 1909, Malmédy, Belgium; lives in Dieudonné, France)

The small city at the border of the French-speaking part of Belgium, where the painter, sculptor, and graphic artist Raoul Ubac was born, is situated in the Belgian Ardennes. The surrounding country, of vast forests, moors, rocky terrain, dominated by the high Fagnes plateau, powerfully influenced the artist. Ubac's parents, severe in manner, did not encourage their son's artistic tendencies. For a brief period Ubac considered studying for a career as forestry inspector, but he continued to draw, embarked on several long walking tours throughout Europe (between 1926 and 1934), and voiced opposition toward his social milieu. He came briefly to Paris (1928), where he met the poet Jean Gacon, who introduced him to Montparnasse artistic circles and the painter Otto Freundlich. He returned to Malmédy (1928–30) and again rebelled against his family and upbringing. Already ripe for an intellectual encounter with surrealism, Ubac's reading of the first *Surrealist Manifesto*, given to him by a young teacher in 1929, was, in his words, "a revelation and a calling."

In Paris (between 1930 and 1934) Ubac frequented the Montparnasse art academies (such as the Grande Chau-mière) and came into contact with the surrealists. He attended the first screening of Bunuel and Dali's *L'Age d'or* (at Studio 28) and became politically active. During a stay in Cologne, calling himself Rolf Ubach, he joined the Progressive Artists Association headed by Max Ernst and Otto Freundlich. Around 1933 the influence of the surrealists and Man Ray in particular became predominant. Setting aside painting and devoting himself to photography, Ubac developed several techniques: *brûlage*, solarization, and petrification, a process of off-register sandwich-printing by which his images gained dimension, appearing as if they were in low relief. Writing in *Minotaure*, André Breton described this technique as one of the fertile new directions of surrealist art (1939). In Paris, under the pen name Raoul Michelet, Ubac published a small book of poems and photographs with Camille Bryen, *Actuation poétique* (1934). He had met Bryen through an exhibition of his own photomontages at the Galerie Gravitations earlier in 1934. The two men then joined to exhibit in unusual places "automatist" objects made by Bryen, and to plaster the walls of Paris with their poems and photographs in poster form. Ubac was active in the surrealist movement (1936–39), his photographs appearing in *Minotaure* to accompany texts by Breton, Péret, Eluard.

During World War II Ubac sought refuge in Carcassonne with Magritte and Louis Scutenaire. In 1941 the catalogue of his last show of photographs at the Galerie Dietrich in Brussels carried a preface by Paul Nougé. With Magritte, Ubac edited the review *Invention collective* and participated in the Main à Plume Group (1940). His association with the circle around the periodical *Message*, edited by Jean Lescure, provided the opportunity to continue his collaboration with other poets, including Eluard and Raymond Queneau. Six of his photographs illustrated Lescure's book, *L'Exercise de la pureté* (1942). In spite of his growing lack of interest in and distance from surrealism, he took part in the exhibition "Surréalisme," at the Galerie des Editions La Boétie (1945). The war finally "liberated" Ubac from the movement.

About 1945 Ubac gave up photography and again began to draw and paint, mostly gouaches. He took part in the reviews *Troisième Convoi* and *Voir* (both 1948; poems by Eluard, illustrated by Ubac), and started to frequent a new group of painters, including Jean Bazaine and other artists of the School of Paris. From 1951 until the present he has exhibited at the Galerie Maeght, Paris. He was awarded Fourth Prize at the Carnegie Institute Exhibition (1954). Concentrating on two major themes in recent years—landscape and the human body—Ubac has had several large retrospectives: at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (1968) and at the Fondation Maeght in St. Paul de Vence (1978). Closely associated with poets, he has illustrated the work of many, including Jacques Dupin, R. G. Lecomte, Roger Caillois, André Frenaud, Yves Bonnefoy, Christian Dotremont, and Eluard.

In an interview with Jean Grenier, Ubac has stated that he became interested in surrealism and photography because the surrealists emphasized the importance of the object, stretching its poetic significance to the fullest. Through surrealist photography, he wanted to go beyond the object by exposing it to the most unusual treatment possible. He conceded that, perhaps, this is too much to ask of an apparatus conceived only to record.

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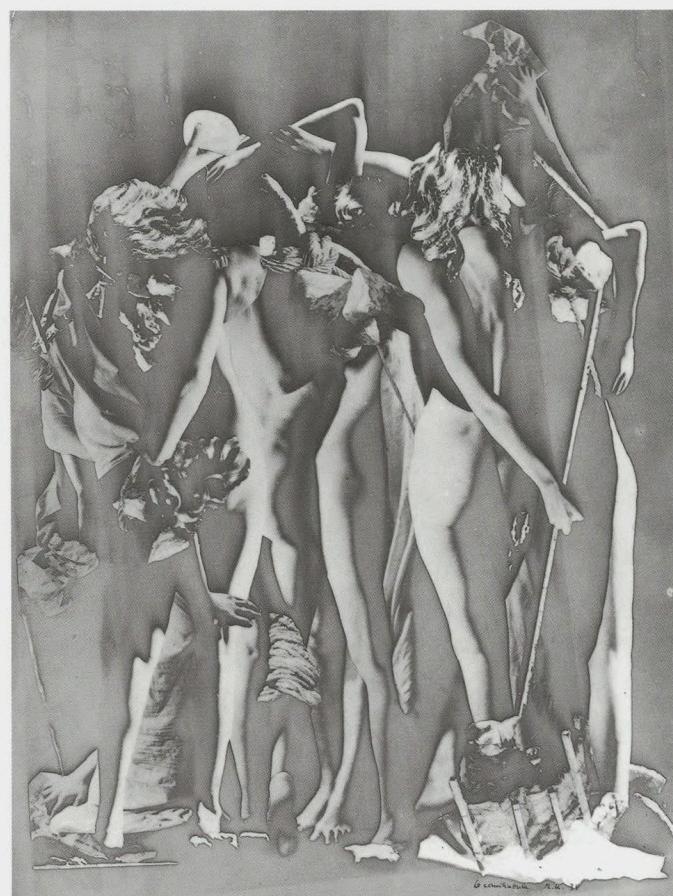


Fig. 235. Raoul Ubac, *Untitled*, 1939. Galerie Adrien Maeght, Paris.



Fig. 236. Anonymous, *Face in the Grass* (*Un Visage dans l'herbe*), n.d. Ethnographic Museum, Basel.

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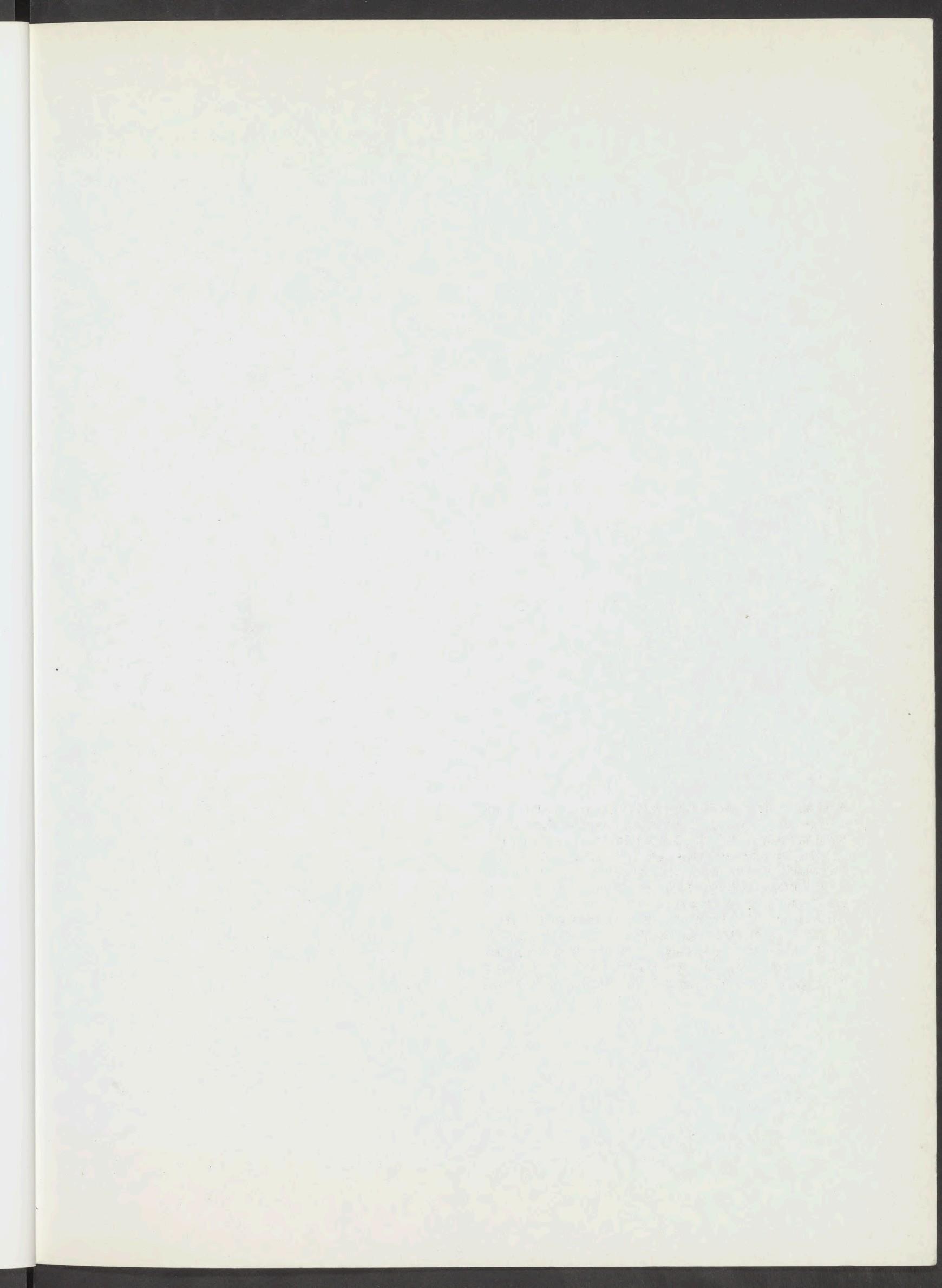
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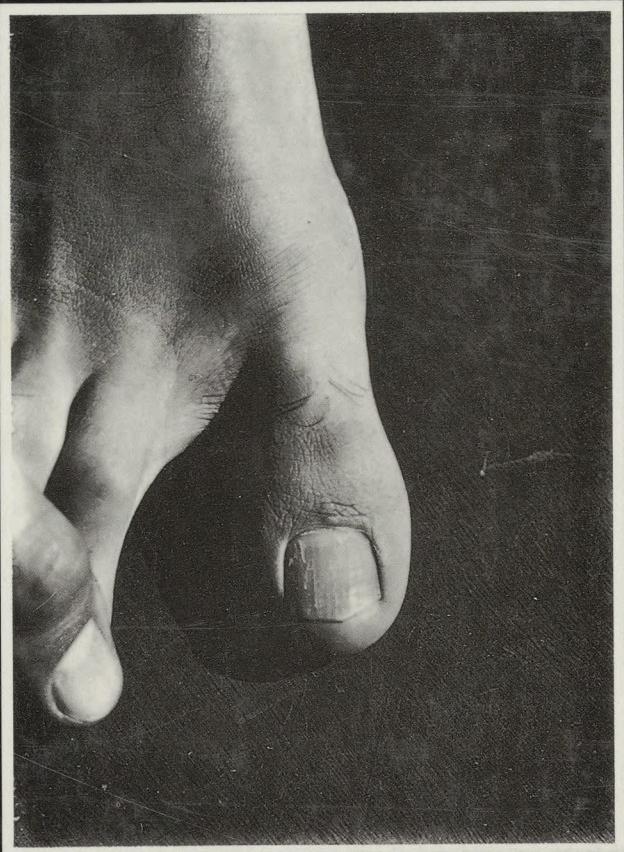
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stop being illustrated with drawings and appear  
only with photographs?"

—André Breton

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